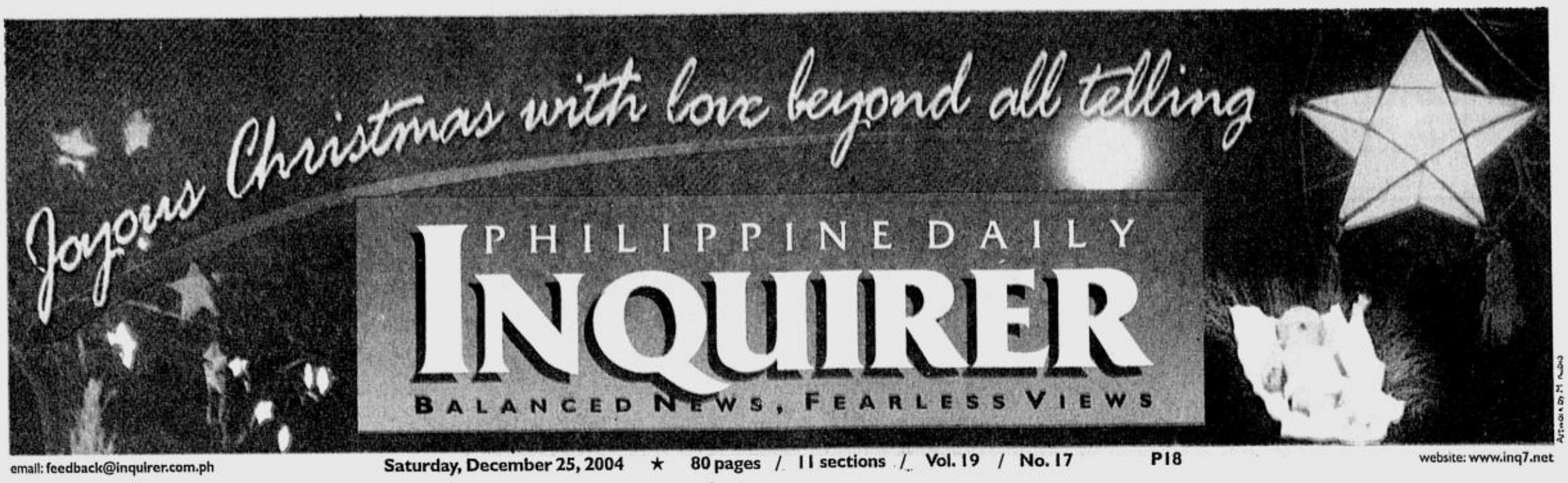


PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph | Saturday, December 25, 2004 ★ 80 pages / 11 sections / Vol. 19 / No. 17 | P18 | website: www.inq7.net

PNP says plot fizzled out

No carolers in Infanta; townsfolk still grieving

By Philip C. Tubeza

NO CHRISTMAS carolers wander in this place. Only survivors still searching for their dead.

While the Christian world celebrates Christmas today, the townsfolk of Infanta, Quezon, are still reeling from the tragedy of Tropical Depression "Winnie," which struck on Nov. 29 and swept away not just lives and homes, but also their dreams.

"We are now like a ghost town. Those who have the means have gone to Manila," said Fr. Francisco "Boy" Makabenta, the town's parish priest.

No colorful Christmas decor adorn the houses along muddy streets of the town center, many parts of which were still buried in thick mud. Sixty-three people are still missing while many of the houses damaged by floodwaters and uprooted trees lay empty.

It was only on Wednesday that electricity was restored, but only in some barangays.

"When somebody greets me 'Merry Christmas,' I can't help but cry because I can't feel that there is still Christmas," said Melanie Glorioso, the deputy chief of Infanta's social welfare office.

"It would be rare for a family here to celebrate Christmas. The others have gone to

NO CAROLERS/ A14

THERE'S room for a smile on the faces of the children in storm-ravaged Infanta, Quezon, as they trudge home over hardened mud with the fruits of the kindness of strangers—relief goods standing in for holiday gifts. ROGER MARGALLO

Red Cross brings 'noche buena' to typhoon victims in Quezon

By Michael Lim Ubac

QUEZON—In spite of the devastation wrought by a series of typhoons, the spirit of Christmas is alive.

On Christmas Eve, about 10,000 families in the towns of Real, Infanta and General Nakar had the traditional noche buena consisting of spaghetti, noodles, canned goods and cheese; sugar, salt, chocolate drink, coffee and milk.

Their children ate cakes, cookies and candies and were given new shirts, slippers and toys.

The typhoon victims have only the Philippine National Red Cross and its donors to thank.

On board a Huey helicopter lent by the Philippine Air Force, Sen. Richard Gordon, who is Red Cross chair playing Santa Claus, flew to the towns of Real and Infanta distributing Christmas gift packs worth P1.5 million.

He skipped Nakar due to security concerns, but the goods were delivered to the intended beneficiaries just the same.

Gordon was warmly welcomed by about 2,000 children who cheered, "Merry Christmas," upon seeing him and his Red Cross team.

"This is not patronage. I'm not

RED CROSS/ A14

FPJ fans won't join march on Malacañang

By Fe Zamora and Alcuin Papa

POLITICAL adventurers who had tried to exploit the death of Fernando Poe Jr. to destabilize the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo were rebuffed when the movie idol's followers rejected calls to march on Malacañang after his funeral, a ranking police officer said yesterday.

"They were banking on the strength of the FPJ forces, but they missed assessing correctly that these people were ordinary movie fans who would not be roused to take political actions," said Senior Supt. Rodolfo Mendoza, deputy chief of the Philippine National Police's Crime Investigation and Detection Group.

Mendoza said the PNP had monitored "organized political groups" massing in the cities of Makati and Caloocan on Wednesday, ready to move to Mendiola "if the funeral goers decide to march on Malacañang."

But most of those who had earlier queued at the Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon City to view Poe's remains were "legitimate fans in their 50s and 60s," Mendoza said.

He also said the refusal of Poe's widow, Susan Roces, to lead the march on Malacañang was another blow to the alleged destabilization plot.

But the Armed Forces yesterday confirmed that it had questioned a colonel regarding the alleged plot.

Col. Jose Gamus was "invited" to the compound of the Intelligence Service of the AFP in Camp Aguinaldo on Thursday night and questioned, said Lt. Col. Buenaventura Pascual, chief of the military's Public Information Office.

PNP/ A4

A YEAR AFTER

New village rising where 120 died

By Leticia M. Subang
Contributor

(First of two parts)

SAN FRANCISCO, Panaon Island, Southern Leyte—A new village is slowly taking shape in Barangay Punta.

The survivors of last year's devastating landslides are building new homes at a relocation site, collectively working to get on with their lives.

We gathered once more in Punta on Dec. 19 for the *hugkas* or *babang luksa* (the first death anniversary), which culminated in a Mass and an offering of flowers and candles at the huge wooden cross that marks the place where most of the victims' bodies were found huddled together the day after the landslides.

With us were two boatloads of Limasawa residents led by fishermen Robert Galvez and George Betonio.

On Dec. 19 last year, the two fishermen along with 11 other passengers from Maasin were heading to Limasawa. Navigating with a small compass in the midst of strong rain and

NEW VILLAGE/ A4

BUT Christmas will be just another day for other Infanta residents like Lucia de los Reyes, 67, whose home was among those wrecked by the killer landslides and floods. An image of the Child Jesus provides a measure of comfort. REM ZAMORA

Bonus in Feb. for 1.2-million gov't workers

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

AFTER a national survey showed a growing number of Filipinos were expecting a bleak Christmas today, Malacañang gave a "bit of good news" to cheer them up—the 1.2 million government employees at least.

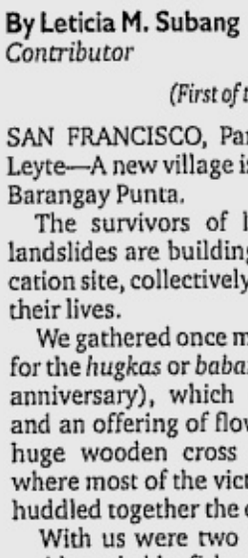
There will be a cash bonus for civil servants come February next year, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye announced yesterday.

"To those of our compatriots who feel that their Christmas this year won't be as happy as in the past, well ... we have some bit of good news. It is for the government employees," Bunye said in a dzMM radio interview.

"This is the promise of the government—the cash bonus for Christmas will become a Valentine's bonus," Bunye said.

BONUS/ A14

US debate rages on how to celebrate Christmas



NEW YORK—When US President George W. Bush kicked off his year-end press conference this week by wishing everyone "Happy Holidays," he was flirting with an issue that has triggered protests, lawsuits and boycotts.

Touted as the season of harmony, Christmas in the United States has become a source of discord and debate over how to

US DEBATE/ A4

Alabang house boasts of 200 'belens'

PRECIOUS Nativity collection ... BETOY JOHNSON

By Volt Contreras

CHRISTMAS is not just around the corner—it's in every corner of the house of lawyer Asuncion Kalalo, whose treasured collection of *belen* or Nativity figures has reached over 200 and counting.

Every Yuletide for the last five years, Kalalo's home in posh Ayala Alabang village in Muntinlupa City is transformed into a United Nations of Nativity scenes.

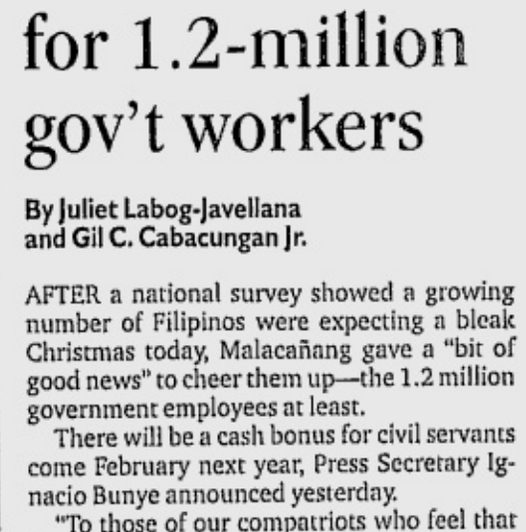
The Christmas tableaus come in different shapes, sizes, costumes and even, race. They are displayed in the living room, hallways, front door and gate.

There are scenes which tell the story of the Holy Family's "Flight to Egypt."

There is a ceramic painting of the Virgin Mary on a donkey about to breastfeed the infant Jesus with St. Joseph walking ahead, guiding the donkey.

There are chestnut-sized dioramas and free-standing statues—the

ALABANG/ A14



... INCLUDES the smallest "belen." BETOY JOHNSON

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers
SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: CHONA GALANG, PDI RESEARCH/12/25/04

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second FRONT PAGE

Text us your feedback: Inquirer news name/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Bagalo	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Catapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

GMA defends Naia 3 'seizure'

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday defended the state's expropriation of the $650-million Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 (Naia 3) built by Germany's Fraport AG and its partners, saying the move was only resorted to after talks collapsed.

"The expropriation was undertaken only after all reasonable measures to arrive at a negotiated settlement broke down," President Arroyo said in a statement.

Ms Arroyo's remarks came after Fraport, which operates Frankfurt airport, accused the Philippine government of committing a "further flagrant breach of the law" in taking over the largely completed but unused terminal.

The Manila International Airport Authority took control of Naia 3 last Tuesday, or 19 months after the Supreme Court nullified the contract of the Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco)—the consortium which built the terminal—and ordered the government to pay the builder just compensation.

Fraport owns 30-percent of Piatco.

The government had stepped up negotiations with Piatco and Fraport for an amicable settlement when the SC decision became final in March this year and after the President won a fresh term in office.

The President said "two new waves of effort were undertaken" to settle the dispute over the terminal amicably but these failed, not due to the government but because of "deep reasons" that prevented Fraport and other members of the consortium from arriving at a unified position.

Malacañang disclosed that the President also consulted a number of businessmen, lawyers and politicians, including also-ran presidential bet Raul Roco, before the government went ahead with the expropriation.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye confirmed that Roco was asked for his opinion and that this consultation was part of the President's policy to reach out to her rivals in the bitterly contested elections.

Ms Arroyo said "prompt, just compensation will be paid in accordance with Philippine law," adding that due process would be accorded all parties, including the foreign investors.

"The care shown by the three branches of government, and our careful adherence to the law and due process are underscored by the availability of remedies to Piatco every step of the way," the President said.

She said the required sum had been deposited with the expropriation court before the terminal was taken over.

Fraport has demanded the government should pay a minimum of $350 million euros ($465 million) for the terminal but officials have said that a three-member commission, appointed by a court, will determine the compensation.

The government earlier offered a P3-billion ($53.57 million) down payment to Piatco, but Fraport rejected this as inadequate.

The President also justified the takeover of Naia 3, saying it was the government's response to the moves of Piatco and Fraport to file suits in two international arbitration bodies which amounted to questioning the country's sovereignty.

"We are vigorously defending our right to implement our own laws as a sovereign country in the two arbitration proceedings. This includes the constitutional role of the Supreme Court as the final arbiter of the law. Its decision must be fully respected and upheld," said the President who noted that the High Court has already rejected Piatco's motion for reconsideration twice.

In annulling the operating contract with Piatco, the government said the 1998 document signed by the previous government of Joseph Estrada had been disadvantageous to the Philippines.

The President also said she opted to take over the facility because she was "concerned at the unmet need of our overseas Filipino workers, businessmen and tourists who are deprived of a modern, safe and convenient airport terminal."

The terminal has been left unused since major building work was virtually completed in 2002. There had been numerous calls for the terminal to be put in operation to lessen the congestion at existing airport facilities.

Fraport has said it will still pursue its demands for financial compensation in a long-running legal battle that is currently before the World Bank's International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes. *Gil Cabacungan, AFP*

CHRISTMAS IS ALIVE Children's faces light up as they open their gift packs from the Philippine National Red Cross. Some 10,000 families in the towns of Real, Infanta and General Nakar, devastated by recent typhoons, enjoyed the traditional *noche buena* of spaghetti, noodles, canned goods, cheese, sugar, salt, chocolate drinks, coffee and milk. ROGER MARGALLO

Rush repair of Umiray water tunnel, gov't urged

THE PRESIDENT of the Central Luzon Congressional Caucus yesterday urged the government to rush the repair of the Angat-Umiray transmission pipelines which were damaged by the recent typhoons.

Rep. Wilhelmino Sy-Alvarado (Lakas, Bulacan) made the call following a recent statement by Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System Administrator Orlando Hondrade that irrigation water for Central Luzon, particularly in Bulacan and Pampanga, will be cut by 100 percent starting April 2005.

Alvarado noted that according to Hondrade, irrigation supply will have to be cut off to save water to meet the summer needs of households in Metro Manila.

Alvarado said that the 22,000-strong Angat-Maasim Irrigator Association composed of farmers from the two provinces have sought his intercession as the move will affect 26,000 hectares of farmlands.

"The farmers believe that Hondrade is being biased to the concessionaires of Manila Water Corp. and Maynilad," Alvarado said, referring to the Ayala and Lopez-owned water firms servicing Metro Manila.

Alvarado explained that based on the current sharing system for Angat Dam's capacity of 60 centimeters of water, 36 cm should go for the irrigation of farmlands in 17 municipalities of Bulacan and four towns in Pampanga, and 22 cm are for MWSS for distribution in Metro Manila.

"But in practice, the MWSS is drawing 53 cm per year, leaving a very minimal amount for the farmlands," he said. "The worst part is that almost 50 percent of the water drawn (by MWSS) is unaccounted due to busted and unrepaired pipes."

Alvarado also said that based on a World Bank study, industrial establishments in Metro Manila have more than two to three water connections and "only one of these is metered."

"There is really a need for the MWSS to rush the repair of the Angat-Umiray transmission pipes and solve the problem of water shortage," Alvarado said. *Carlito Pablo*

Palace sees more oil price cuts in January

MALACAÑANG expects more fuel price cuts early next month after oil companies slashed their pump prices between 30 centavos and 35 centavos per liter beginning Thursday.

"Based on our calculations, we can still expect more price cuts but not within this year. Probably, in the early weeks of January we can expect lower prices if the declining trend in oil prices continue in the world market," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

The oil companies cited falling world crude oil prices of Dubai crude oil and diesel and unleaded gasoline in the benchmark Singapore market for their decision to cut pump prices.

Malacanang is satisfied with the rate of decline in local fuel prices even though the industry's private watchdog, the Consumer and Oil Price Watch, argued that oil companies should have reduced prices by a larger amount.

"We give importance to the opinion of Mr. Raul Concepcion (Price Watch chair) who we all know really monitors the detailed movement of world oil prices," Bunye said. *Gil Cabacungan*

'Kiwis' warned RP 'high risk' area for travel

WELLINGTON, New Zealand—New Zealand travelers were advised on Christmas Eve that the Philippines is a high risk area for travel, with a heightened threat of terrorism throughout the country.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade said Friday that the "high risk" ranking "reflects new information suggesting an increased terrorist threat" in areas including Manila. It said there was a serious risk of terrorism and kidnapping, and warned New Zealanders to be very careful.

It didn't cite sources, saying only that "this travel advice has been reviewed, reissued, and upgraded on Dec. 24, 2004."

It recommended that tourism and nonessential travel be deferred for all areas of the Philippines, and that the southern Philippines be avoided altogether.

The no-travel areas included all of Mindanao, Sulu archipelago including Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi island groups, the ministry said on its Website.

Last week, New Zealand along with Australia, the United States, Britain and Japan warned that terrorists were preparing to launch attacks against Western targets in Indonesia.

Australia's warning was unusually specific, saying it had "credible information" that terrorists could be targeting the Hilton Hotel chain in the country. The warnings from the other nations did not mention specific targets.

Indonesian authorities and hotels immediately tightened pre-Christmas security. *AP*

3 execs get Lee Kuan Yew Fellowship awards

THE SINGAPORE government has awarded this year's Lee Kuan Yew Fellowship to three outstanding Filipinos.

In a press statement, the Singapore Embassy identified the recipients as Mrs. Lea Ricolcol, chief of staff to the secretary of energy; Dr. Lilibeth David, chief of health policy division, Department of Health; and Mr. Lyndon Paul Daz, deputy administrator of the Livelihood Corp., Department of Agriculture.

The Lee Kuan Yew Fellowship is designed to prepare civil servants for higher leadership positions in their organizations. Lee Kuan Yew Fellows will enroll in a year-long Master in Public Management (MPM) program at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore. The program is organized jointly by the National University of Singapore and Harvard University. It includes a seven-week stint at the Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government and a study visit to Washington D.C.

During the award ceremony at the embassy on Thursday, Charge d'Affaires Paul Koh congratulated the Fellows as "very worthy representatives of the Philippines." Koh urged them to maximize the benefits from this program when they return to the Philippines upon graduation. He also reiterated Singapore's commitment to share its experience in training and human development resource with its Asean neighbors.

Also present at the ceremony were Energy Secretary Vincent Perez; Bernardo Mitra, administrator of the Livelihood Corp.; Dr. Mario Villaverde, Health Policy Development and Planning bureau director; Ms Editha Abergas, OIC executive officer of the Special Committee on Scholarships, Neda; relatives and friends of the Fellows.

Offering his response on behalf of the Philippine government, Perez thanked the Singapore Government for the opportunity the Lee Kuan Yew Fellowship offers to senior civil servants in the Philippines. Drawing from his own experience of having lived in Singapore, Perez urged the Fellows to experience Singaporean culture, "particularly the food" and places of interest.

The Fellows will leave for Singapore in January. The Fellowship covers full tuition fees, return airfare, accommodation, living allowance, medical benefits and insurance.

Leave Susan alone, Nene tells opposition politicos

By Christine O. Avendaño

"LET her be."

On the eve of Christmas Day, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., appealed to the opposition not to push Susan Roces, the widow of Fernando Poe Jr., into doing something she clearly wanted no part of.

"It may be cruel to burden her with partisan political agenda when she's totally uninclined to accept that role," Pimentel said in a phone interview.

Pimentel was reacting to the statement that the direction of the opposition would depend on the plans of Roces, who buried her husband just three days ago. Poe died last week after suffering a massive stroke.

Former Sen. Francisco Tatad had said the other day that Roces was the "inspiration" of the opposition right now and that they would "wait for word on what she wants to do."

Roces stunned a lot of people when she spoke her mind during the seven-day wake for Poe who narrowly lost to President Macapagal-Arroyo in the hotly contested May presidential election. The movie actress lashed back at the critics of her husband, particularly the way his detractors tried to put him down as just a mere actor when he ran for president.

Pimentel said Roces had made it clear in her media interviews that she was not interested in entering politics.

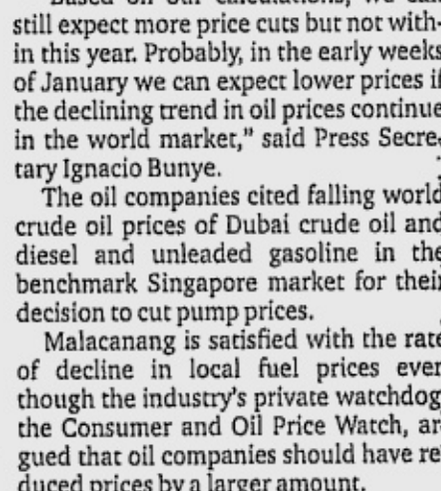
The leader of the Senate minority urged fellow oppositionists "not to allow partisan political considerations to taint (Roces') stand on basic issues such as those relating to the poor."

"Let her be," he added.

He admitted that opposition members have different opinions in defining its direction, with Poe's death.

In the Senate, Pimentel had already moved to unify ranks of the opposition with his call for Senators Edgardo Angara and Panfilo Lacson, both members of the nine-member minority and bitter rivals since the last election, to work together.

Poe's running mate, former Sen. Loren Legarda, had said that in the wake of Poe's death the opposition would have to re-assess its role.



ROCES

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Palace sure Estrada coming back after HK surgery

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

MALACAÑANG yesterday reiterated its assurance that ousted President Joseph Estrada would come back to the country after undergoing knee surgery in Hong Kong.

Estrada is set to leave tomorrow after the Sandiganbayan anti-graft court, which is trying him for plunder, allowed him to have a medical treatment in a Hong Kong hospital from Dec. 26 to Jan. 15.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye disputed the position of Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson and chief government prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio that Estrada would seek political asylum to evade facing the charges of plunder, a non-bailable crime punishable by death.

Bunye said Estrada's undertaking with the Bureau of Immigration and the Hong Kong government was clear assurance that he would return to the country after his medical treatment.

"There is no chance the former president will not come back to the Philippines as alleged by Governor Singson," Bunye said in a radio interview.

'SADDEST' 4th Christmas in jail for Erap

By Armand N. Nocum

IT'S A bleak Christmas for former President Joseph Estrada.

Speaking through his spokesperson Didagen Dilangalen, Estrada said his fourth Christmas in jail was made more painful by the recent death of actor Fernando Poe Jr., Estrada's buddy of 40 years.

"This is one of my saddest Christmas," Dilangalen, a former Maguindanao congressman, quoted Estrada as saying.

"He (Poe) was like a brother to me and a very close friend," Estrada said.

Estrada also complained of being in pain, caused by his arthritic knees and slipped disc. He is set to go to Hong Kong tomorrow for a knee replacement operation.

When he delivered a midnight eulogy for Poe last Tuesday, Estrada said he was gripping hard at the rostrum to keep himself from falling.

"I was in pain the whole time, but I tried not to show it," said Estrada, who claims to be unable to stand for a long period of time.

Estrada said he also missed his sickly mother Mary Ejercito. He had visited her before proceeding to Poe's wake.

But Estrada said he might ask for a new Christmas furlough so he could spend more time with his mother before proceeding to Hong Kong.

He said his mother was one reason why there was no basis to allegations that he would not return.

"I'm no flight risk," he said in reaction to the warning aired by Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson and several prosecutors that Estrada would no longer return to the country should he be allowed to leave.

He also downplayed talk that he was behind a new destabilization plot. "Why is it that I'm always being blamed when there are reports of a coup?" said Estrada, who was also linked to the Oakwood mutiny last year.

He scoffed at reports that there were plans to put up a military junta, with Poe's wife Susan Roces being installed as a figurehead.

"*Malabo yan* (That cannot happen)," he said of Roces, who had repeatedly appealed to Poe's fans not to inject politics in his wake or burial.

He said Christmas eve would have him spending time with his close relatives, including Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, who was set to visit at his rest house in Tanay, Rizal, yesterday afternoon.

Contacted by the INQUIRER, the young Estrada said he too felt his father's pain, having spent one Christmas with the former President in jail. Father and son are facing plunder and perjury charges before the Sandiganbayan.

"It was so sad being by our lonesome selves during the *noche buena*," he said of the traditional Filipino gathering and feast on Christmas eve.

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PNP says plot fizzled out

From page A1

Gamus had been restricted to quarters—the military version of house arrest—for campaigning for the late opposition standard-bearer in the May election. He was returned to his quarters in Fort Bonifacio after being questioned, Pascual said.

"But he is still under guard. Let's just wait for the final report from the Isafp," Pascual told reporters.

No arrests

According to Pascual, Gamus did not stay very long in the Isafp compound and there has been "no new arrest" of any other active military officer in connection with the alleged plot.

Military spokesperson Brig. Gen. Alexander Yano confirmed this, saying: "The AFP has not arrested any officer in connection with destabilization moves. However, the AFP intelligence units are continuously monitoring threats this Yuletide season."

He said the public should "continue the celebration of the holidays" and "not worry about" the supposed plot.

Yano also said that Gamus had been granted a leave when his father died, and that he was called in Thursday night to be accounted for and later returned to quarters.

On Wednesday, the day Poe was buried, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez warned of "credible intelligence reports that there is an evolving conspiracy on the part of some groups" to use the movie idol's death to stir up a plot against the Arroyo administration.

That same day, Pascual aired the possibility that a destabilization move would be launched by groups bent on taking advantage of the crowd during Poe's funeral.

Not fugitives

Poe never conceded defeat in the May election, and his supporters continue to insist that he had been cheated.

Gamus, a 1976 graduate of the Philippine Military Academy, was last assigned to the 9th Infantry Brigade based in Bicol.

During the election campaign, he was reportedly spotted in Basilan and other provinces in the South where he was previously assigned, allegedly campaigning for Poe in violation of military regulations. He has been restricted to quarters since then.

Reuters reported on Thursday that two unnamed colonels had been arrested in relation to the alleged destabilization plot.

But all Pascual told reporters on that day was that the AFP was monitoring the movements of two colonels whom he declined to name.

The other colonel was later identified as Oscarlito Mapalo.

Yano stressed yesterday that Gamus and Mapalo were neither "wanted" by the military nor were they fugitives.

He likewise stressed that they had not been arrested for involvement in any destabilization plot.

'He refused'

Mapalo, who served as deputy chief of the Army's Ordnance and Chemical Unit, has been on terminal leave since Aug. 13.

Mendoza yesterday said he had tried to convince Mapalo to appear at a press conference "to denounce the others who were involved in the plot."

"He refused," Mendoza said.

According to Mendoza, Mapalo was contacted by opposition groups to join the alleged plot to oust Ms Arroyo after being bypassed by a "rotten and politicized" system of promotion in the AFP.

Mapalo, a member of the PMA Class of 1979, was last assigned to the Army's Logistics unit in Fort Bonifacio.

He called a press conference two months ago to denounce the Army promotions board for supposedly falsifying his records to make it appear he was not qualified for promotion.

The military denied this, saying that Mapalo went through the required evaluation for promotion to the next rank, but failed to make it to the quota. *With an AFP report*

GMA: Christmas most meaningful in face of many challenges

THIS Christmas should be most meaningful to Filipinos after they weathered many challenges with a deep, abiding faith in God, President Macapagal-Arroyo said yesterday.

The President also thanked the Filipinos for supporting her despite alleged new plots to unseat her.

She paid tribute to Filipino fortitude after Social Weather Stations said a growing number of Filipinos expected a sad Christmas.

Filipinos have a deep and overflowing faith that carried them through the many challenges in their personal lives and as a nation, according to Ms Arroyo.

"Ang mga reporma na aking sinimulan upang puksain ang korupsiyon, pagyamanin ang kaban ng bayan, at pasiglahin ang ekonomiya ay sama-sama nating isulong hanggang ang kahirapan ay mawakasan (Let us pursue the reforms I have started to curb corruption, raise revenue collection and improve the economy so we can end poverty)," she said.

US debate rages on how to celebrate Christmas

From page A1

celebrate the holiday without promoting religion in a way that might alienate non-Christians.

The argument is a perennial one, but this year, with the Christian right taking credit for Bush's reelection, traditionalists are fighting harder than ever against what they see as a political effort to take the Christ out of Christmas.

"A covert and deceptive war has been waged on Christmas to remove any mention of it from the public square during the Christmas season," declares the California-based Committee to Save Merry Christmas on its website.

The committee has launched a campaign to boycott major retailers, including big-name department stores like Macy's, which favor in-store decorations proclaiming "Happy Holidays" or "Season's Greetings" rather than "Merry Christmas."

"It is regrettable that an attempt to bring all people together in peace and love at this time of year is being perceived as offensive by some when clearly the attempt is just the opposite," Macy's spokesperson Carol Sanger said in response to the boycott call.

"Merry Christmas" supporters back their argument by citing numerous examples where secular sensitivities are generally seen to have been taken too far.

Carols banned

A school district in New Jersey achieved national media attention for banning Christmas carols, even instrumental versions, while the organizers of a "Winterfest" in Wichita, Kansas, opted to call their Christmas tree a "community tree."

The main battleground for the Happy Holidays vs Merry Christmas debate is the public school system, as witnessed by two letters to the New York Times this week.

Andrea Economos from Scarsdale, New York, wrote to express his outrage at being forbidden from discussing the religious significance of Christmas in his daughter's second-grade class.

"I may share my holiday 'traditions,' but I may not say that Christians believe that Jesus is the son of God and that this is a miracle," Economos said. "I may not say that this is the true meaning of Christmas for Christians."

On the other hand, Deb Di Gregorio, from New Jersey, described her delight at attending her 6-year-old daughter's school holiday concert, where traditional Christmas songs were excised in favor of those that celebrated seasonal themes of family, friendship.

"The parents oohed and ahhed and applauded with enthusiasm. Everyone left smiling," Di Gregorio wrote. "Sometimes 'limitations' make us so much more creative and help us look at our world anew."

The American holiday season kicks off with the nondenominational celebration of Thanksgiving, but then gets more complicated with the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, closely followed by Christmas.

Jewish groups

Jewish groups have been prominent in lobbying schools to keep the seasonal celebrations inclusive for the 18 percent of Americans who are non-Christians.

"People get carried away on both sides," said Todd Gutnick, a spokesperson for the Jewish Anti-Defamation League, which sends letters out to schools every year offering guidelines for recognizing religious and cultural diversity.

"We are not out to ban Christmas," Gutnick said. "We're just worried about situations, in a school for example, where a child might feel alienated. That can be hurtful."

The ADL cited an incident when students in one classroom were working on Christmas-angel arts and crafts project, and Jewish students were instructed to leave and work on another project in the hallway.

A lighter resolution to the debate has been put forward by the creators of the television teen soap, "The O.C.," in the form of a hybrid holiday called "Chrismukkah."

The idea has gained some traction among interfaith couples and even spawned a website selling Chrismukkah gifts, including T-shirts with slogans like "Oy Joy" and "Merry Mazeltov." *AFP*

New village rising where more than 120 died

From page A1

zero visibility, they missed Limasawa and found refuge in Punta—only to be shocked by a series of landslides a few minutes after they pulled their boat ashore.

It was Galvez and Betonio who brought my cousin, Eduardo "Bebot" Subang, who was seriously wounded, to the provincial hospital in Maasin the next day. Bebot's leg later had to be amputated.

"We wanted to visit Bebot and see how he is doing," Betonio said as we gathered along the shore after the Mass.

"Punta will always be part of us," added Galvez.

Constantly in fear

The survivors of Punta can easily validate the ordeal that the residents of devastated Real in Quezon—which was hit by four successive storms early this month—are now experiencing.

According to Barangay Captain Ricky Subang, all 22 barangays of San Francisco have passed a resolution to set aside some money to be donated to the families dislocated by the landslides and flash floods in Quezon.

The rains brought by the recent storms have also triggered landslides in Panaon, but smaller in scale and farther from the villages.

Yet some residents are constantly in fear. In the nearby barangay of Sta. Paz, where a huge crack resulting from geological faults has been found on the mountain, classes are suspended and the residents prepare to evacuate whenever it rains continuously for at least two days.

Many of the survivors, particularly the children, still live with the trauma caused by the tragedy. Thunder, lightning and heavy rains send the children crying and cringing in fear.

Nightmare

Some of the elderly, particularly those who lost their spouses in the landslides, often fall into moments of deep silence. Or they resurrect their lost loved ones by recalling funny anecdotes, and in the next breath scaring themselves with stories of apparitions and ghosts.

Our relatives keep going back to Punta, hoping to retrieve lost valuables from the earth that crashed down on their homes that fateful night.

On Christmas Day last year, while temporarily living with relatives, Bartolome Subang or *Tiyo* Ome wished aloud that he had not lost the vintage carpentry tools my grandfather passed on to him before *Lolo* died in 1980. He knew he would need those tools once construction at the relocation site started.

Florencio Subang (*Tiyo* Florin) wanted to return to Punta that night, after realizing that in the confusion, he had left a wad of cash in his cabinet. But his children insisted that they keep on moving.

Along the road *Tiyo* Florin spotted and greeted his cousin Paterno Subang (*Tiyo* Pater), who was holding a flashlight and an umbrella.

Tiyo Florin, together with his younger children, later made it to the town safely.

Manong Gaudencio Benero is still haunted by the nightmare of skulls and skeletons that he had shortly before the tragedy.

Upon learning that the first landslide had destroyed *Tiyo* Pater's house, *Manong* Gaudencio instinctively knew that the nightmare had begun.

There were only four people living in that house—*Tiyo* Pater, his wife *Tiya* Pering, and their two grandchildren.

Manong Gaudencio's elder brother, Patron, also did not make it, and it took our relatives three months to find the bodies of *Tiyo* Pater and *Tiya* Pering.

2-month-old baby

Tiyo Florin's son Ricky, the barangay captain, found himself on a more uncertain path that night.

The third landslide was now blocking the road his father had taken only a few minutes earlier. Ricky's group was forced to go toward the shore, only to move inward again after they found they could not cross Kagpanga, the river that separates Punta and the town.

Clutching his 2-month-old son, Ricky led his group through the clan's rice fields, grappling with waist-deep mud and thorny *nipa* fronds, constantly calling out the names of his other children and his companions, refusing to move further until he had heard them reply.

SURVIVORS in Barangay Punta help each other build a new village in true "bayanihan" style.
LETICIA M. SUBANG/CONTRIBUTOR

Ricky and *Tiyo* Florin were eventually reunited in the house of our aunt, Jenny Subang, who lives across from my parents' house in the town.

Max, Ricky's baby and the youngest survivor, emerged from the ordeal unscathed.

Another aunt, Carmen Gitigan, could not imagine how she made it through that night.

She was in her house, standing on top of a table and trying to reach something when she was swept by the raging mud toward the sea. She found herself still on top of her table, floating on the water.

Whole family

Meanwhile, *Tiyo* Ome, totally buried in the mud, was losing hope—until he realized that he had been pushed toward the sea and was thus able to slowly swim to safety.

His wife, *Tiya* Rosing, and the entire family of his daughter, Renee Subang Paug, the principal of the town's high school and my childhood playmate, perished that night.

Renee's daughter, Karen, had just arrived that evening from Sogod where she was studying.

Tiyo Ome's son, Bebot, was seriously wounded and had to be confined in the Maasin hospital for weeks.

More than 120 Punta residents died on Dec, 19, 2003. Our clan lost 26 children—16 in grade school and 10 in high school.

My mother, Peregrina, particularly misses the kids who used to kiss her hand and greet her every morning as they pass our house on their way to school.

Opening old wounds

Watching the images on TV of the recent tragedy in Quezon is like opening old wounds. I am brought to tears as I remember receiving phone calls from my relatives the day after the landslides, frantically asking for help.

I also remember thinking that with the coming year being an election year, politicians were bound to use our tragedy to project themselves.

But I could not understand how a presidential party, supported by elaborate media coverage and security arrangements, could visit our place and yet could not provide masks, gloves, boots and body bags so we could perform the grim task of pulling out our dead from the mud in order to give them a decent burial.

Every year, our country is hit by typhoons, floods, earthquakes and other calamities, both natural and man-made. We have had a devastating earthquake in Baguio, towns buried in tons of ash from Mt. Pinatubo, countless numbers of lives lost in Ormoc, Cherry Hills, Payatas, and Ozone ... The list is endless.

In fact, the tragic death of Speaker Jose de Venecia's youngest daughter only highlighted a pathetic condition—our continuing incapability to immediately respond to emergencies.

Yet our generosity during times of crisis and our ability to bounce back after seemingly insurmountable challenges are admirable and amazing.

"We have gone through a lot of difficulties in trying to rehabilitate our community and rebuild our lives. But we have also experienced how generous people can be in times of crisis," Ricky said.

Far from forgotten

The past year was not an easy one for the Punta survivors.

As they tried to cope with the trauma, they bickered with one another, presented to and argued their cause with various government officials and donors, got caught in the heat of partisan politics during the May elections, and even had to deal with a bit of religious intolerance. (We trace our roots to the Philippine Independent Church; many Punta residents are now affiliated with the Catholic Church.)

The survivors strove to keep the clan's enclave, which had survived for four generations.

They could not even begin to think of changing the name of their barangay—Punta, or "point," a simple geographic description of the fishing village that is now deserted but far from forgotten.

The settlement was started by my great grandparents, Marcela Moreno and Eusebio Subang in the 1800s. My grandfather, Gervacio, born in 1896, was one of the 13 children of Eusebio and Marcela.

Nobody lives in Punta anymore. But the people regularly visit it—to harvest coconuts from the trees that have remained, or to gather driftwood along the shore for their firewood.

The fishermen, lured by Punta's rich waters, keep coming back to cast their nets. Along its shores, entangled among the corals, are shreds of clothes, blankets and mosquito nets, toys and many other parts of their lives.

Picking up the pieces

And with the help of relatives, various government agencies and civic groups, the survivors have been able to cope with the tragedy.

For the relocation of the 98 households that survived the landslides, the family of Rosario Peregrino Maglana, a member of our clan, donated a piece of land by the national highway, and the municipal government of San Francisco acquired the adjacent property.

Now based in Davao, *Tiya* Sayong had requested that a portion of the land be reserved for her family so she could eventually live with them as she had earlier intended.

She had always dreamed of retiring in Punta and was about to purchase a lot near the village chapel, but the landslides crushed that dream.

The houses are still unfinished, but the survivors now live there. They continue to build using materials supplied by the Red Cross, with financial support from the US government.

The new village will be called Barangay Punta Extension.

Because it is far from the sea, we will miss the times when the village folk gather on the shore to meet the fishermen blessed with a good catch and help them remove the fish entangled in the nets.

It was one of the communal activities that bound the village folk together in the past, and that cannot be replicated at the relocation site. *To be concluded*

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Diggers uncover site of Jesus miracle

JERUSALEM—Archeologists in Jerusalem have uncovered the stone remains of the biblical Siloam Pool, were the Bible says Jesus restored a blind man's eyesight—underlining the link between the works of Jesus and ancient Jewish rituals.

Tucked away in what is now the Arab neighborhood of Silwan, archeologists are slowly digging out the pool, where water still runs in the channel that brought water from a nearby spring.

The Siloam Pool was used by Jews for ritual immersions for about 120 years until the year 70, when the Romans destroyed the Jewish Temple.

Many of Jesus' acts are directly linked to Jewish rituals, and the miracle of the blind man is an example. Jesus put clay in the blind man's eyes and then told him to wash them out in the pure waters of the Siloam Pool, restoring his eyesight. (John 9: 1-7).

In the last four months, archeologists have revealed the pool's 50-meter length and a channel that brought water from the Silwan Spring to the pool. In the past week, a section of stone road that led from the pool to the Jewish Temple was uncovered.

"The moment that we revealed and discovered this four months ago, we were 100 percent sure it was the Siloam Pool," said Eli Shukron, one of the archeologists on the dig.

"We know today that the Siloam Pool is connected to the Temple Mount. There is a road that connects between the two elements. The entire system is clearer today," Shukron said.

Stephen Pfann, a Bible scholar, said that the pool's waters were considered so pure that they could purify even a healed leper.

Pfann said Jesus likely chose to cure the blind man using the purest water available, because people with any disabilities were barred from the Temple.

"The whole point in John's Gospel is that people should not only be healed physically but also healed spiritually," Pfann said. "This discovery helps bring the Gospel alive in the context of Jewish practice."

The archaeologists excavating the site work for the Israel Antiquities Authority. They found biblical-era coins marked with ancient Jewish writing, along with pieces of broken pottery—including a stone bottle cork—helping them confirm that the area was the biblical Siloam Pool. *AP*

Gunmen massacre 23 aboard Honduras bus

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras—Unknown assailants opened fire on a public bus in northern Honduras late Thursday, killing at least 23 passengers and wounding 16 others, apparently many women and children, police said.

The shooting took place at 7:40 p.m. local time in the northern Atlantic city of Chamelecon, 200 km north of the capital, Tegucigalpa, said police spokesperson Deputy Commissioner Wilmer Torres.

"It was an unbelievable massacre," he said in a telephone interview.

Police in the nearby industrial city of San Pedro Sula had arrested one suspect, believed to be a member of the violent Mara Salvatrucha gang, who was driving a vehicle similar to that identified by witnesses as having participated in the attack. Authorities seized a .38-cal. pistol and several automatic weapons from the suspect, and had begun interrogating him, Torres said.

The assailants left a large piece of paper taped to the bus' front windshield with a message saying they represented a revolutionary group that opposes the death penalty. The message contained "vulgar words" against congressional President Porfirio Lobo Sosa and Security Minister Oscar Alvarez, Torres said.

The attack came just two days after Alvarez announced that authorities had uncovered plans by drug traffickers and local criminals to assassinate Honduran President Ricardo Maduro and his family, as well as himself.

"The reports establish that drug traffickers and organized crime have given the gang members the necessary information for them to carry out the attack against the president... and that worries us," Alvarez said at the time. *AP*

Ex-Iraq hostage describes ordeal as 'planet Bin Laden'

PARIS—One of two French journalists freed after a four-month hostage ordeal in Iraq on Thursday spoke of having been "immersed in Planet (Osama) bin Laden" as the pair began giving media interviews after their return to Paris and debriefing by French authorities.

Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot had spent their first day back in France recounting details of their ordeal to the foreign intelligence agency DGSE, before rejoining their families later in the day.

"One of the lessons we drew from our captivity was that we were immersed in planet Bin Laden, especially when we were in a cell of the Islamic Army in the north" of Iraq, Malbrunot told France 2 public television.

"We really understood that these kidnappers were driven not by an Iraqi agenda, but by an agenda of Islamic holy war," said the journalist, speaking from his home town of Montaigeet-en-Forez in central France.

Malbrunot also issued a stern warning to fellow journalists about the dangers of working in Iraq.

"We urge them to be very careful. Our kidnappers told us: 'Do not come back to Iraq, this is a land of war and we do not need you here. We want to settle our scores with the Americans,'" he said.

"The country is crawling with armed men who are out fishing for Westerners," Malbrunot added.

In an interview with France Info radio, Christian Chesnot also warned that "Iraq is a land at war and any foreigner can be seen as a spy."

The two men were flown back from Baghdad to Paris on Wednesday evening, where they were greeted by President Jacques Chirac and reunited with their loved ones amid a national outpouring of joy and relief.

But the happy end to their ordeal was partly overshadowed by a row over an abortive attempt by a French deputy, Didier Julia of Chirac's Union for a Popular Movement, to negotiate their release.

A senior member of the DGSE told Le Figaro newspaper—for which Malbrunot works—that Julia's intervention in September had gravely compromised official efforts to contact the Islamic Army in Iraq.

"The hostage-takers followed the Julia epic on television and obviously they accused us of trying to short-circuit them with a separate team. Suddenly we were in a void, confronted by silence," the unnamed official said.

Malbrunot himself said he was "scandalized by (Julia's) behavior—playing with the lives of two compatriots. It is beneath contempt." *AFP*

FREED hostage Malbrunot kissing girlfriend Sylvie Cherpin Dec. 23. AP

A GLITTERING Christmas tree lights up the Hamburg skyline Dec. 23. AFP

Beware the holiday heartburn

By Alicia Chang

ALBANY, New York—For heartburn sufferers, navigating the gluttonous dinner table during the holiday season can be especially tricky.

Heartburn tends to occur more frequently during the holidays because people feast more than they normally would. And the types of food they eat are decked with more calories and fat, which can slow digestion.

Take eggnog, the rich, creamy, liquor-laced drink that is often a staple at every family gathering and office party. Couple it with well-marbled meats, side dishes drizzling with rich sauces and lots of alcohol and you have the recipe for heartburn.

That doesn't mean you should swear off your favorite foods on Christmas Eve.

"You can make trade-offs that let you have the best of both worlds," said Pat Baird, a registered dietitian in Greenwich, Connecticut.

If you know ahead of time the party you're attending will feature heartburn-triggering foods, snack beforehand and graze at the party, but avoid the fat platters. If there is a dessert buffet, choose a sliver of something sweet instead of trying them all.

Alcohol tends to worsen heartburn, so if you must drink, think about diluting your wine or beer with water or club soda, Baird said.

Heartburn is an irritating chest pain that starts at the breastbone and charges up the throat, heartburn can cause people to accidentally inhale regurgitated stomach acid.

Severe heartburn symptoms are sometimes confused with heart attacks, another holiday risk.

A study published in the journal Circulation earlier this month found that heart attacks and heart disease-related deaths tend to peak on Christmas, the day after, and New Year's Day. Researchers at the University of California at San Diego attributed the increase of cardiac deaths to people delaying medical treatment during the holidays.

People should make sure they know the difference between heartburn and heart attack symptoms and not automatically assume their chest pain is from overindulgence from food, said Dr. David Peura, chair of the National Heartburn Alliance, who was not connected with the study.

Heartburn usually occurs after a meal. A heart attack is often activity-related. But if patients are unsure and their chest pain lasts for more than a few minutes, they should seek immediate medical attention.

The most common heartburn treatments are over-the-counter and prescription heartburn drugs. Pharmacies report a spike in the number of customers buying acid-blocking medications around the holidays, according to the National Community Pharmacists Association, which represents 25,000 independent pharmacies.

"What people do during the holidays is a perfect set-up to provoking heartburn," said Dr. Mel Wilcox, a spokesperson for the American Gastroenterological Association.

Overindulgence is not the only thing people should keep in mind in preventing holiday heartburn. Keeping stress levels low and exercising are also important. People should also avoid eating a few hours before bed and dozing right after dinner since stomach acid levels are higher after a meal and can migrate upward. *AP*

Biggest quake in 4 years harms no one

SYDNEY—The world's biggest earthquake in almost four years, measuring 8.1 on the Richter scale, struck off the coast of Australia's southern island state of Tasmania early Friday, but caused no damage or injury.

Seismological officials said it was felt throughout Tasmania and the South Island of New Zealand, but because it occurred at a depth of 10 km and far from inhabited land, it was barely noticed even by the scientists or penguins on nearby Macquarie Islands.

Geoscience Australia said the epicenter of the quake, which struck at 1:59 a.m., was 400 km off Macquarie Island and 800 km off the coast of Tasmania, about halfway between Australia and Antarctica.

Seismologist Cvetan Sinadinovski said it caused buildings to shake in the island state for up to 15 seconds, but did not cause a tsunami or unusual tidal activity because it was of horizontal rather than vertical displacement and struck far off the coast.

"If it happened underneath a population center in Australia, this would probably have destroyed a whole city," Sinadinovski said.

He described the quake as more than 30 times stronger than the earthquake that devastated the south-eastern Australian city of Newcastle in 1989, claiming 13 lives and injuring 160.

Friday's earthquake, which was initially registered as 7.8 on the Richter scale but later upgraded to 8.1, was the largest since one off the coast of Peru in early 2001, Sinadinovski said. *AFP*

Bomb attack kills 2 in Thai Muslim south

BANGKOK—Two people were killed and at least six others were injured Friday when a bomb hidden in a motorcycle exploded next to a bank in insurgency-hit southern Thailand, police said.

"Two people are now dead. The second death was of a woman, and there are six injured, and I believe that most of them were bank customers," Sub-Lt. Anon Praditsaeng said from Sungai Kolok town where the blast occurred just after 9 a.m.

He said the bomb was planted in a motorcycle parked in front of an ATM machine beside the town's Siam Commercial Bank branch in Narathiwat, one of three southern provinces bearing the brunt of an Islamic separatist insurgency that has left more than 560 people dead this year.

Narathiwat's governor, Pracha Taerat, said an initial report on the blast noted one person had been killed and one of the wounded was in critical condition.

He said the blast was the work of Muslim separatists intent on exhibiting their continued capacity to strike in the south despite a recent crackdown on militancy that netted four suspects identified as masterminds of the violence.

"The bomb attack in Sungai Kolok was absolutely the work of separatist militants who are undergoing a tense psychological war with authorities and want to flex their muscles," Pracha said.

Police had yet to determine how the device was set off or what explosives were used. A forensics team had been dispatched to assess the scene. *AFP*

Whistleblower to enjoy first Christmas as a free man

JERUSALEM—After 18 years of spending Christmas within the four walls of an Israeli jail cell with nothing more than a television for company, Mordechai Vanunu is about to celebrate his first Christmas as a free man.

"For me, this is a very big Christmas. It's my first Christmas after 18 years in prison," says the nuclear whistleblower who was released in April after serving a lengthy prison term for leaking top-secret details about Israel's nuclear program to Britain's Sunday Times.

"In terms of my faith, it's the first time I'm celebrating a real Christmas among friends. I hope this Christmas will be a new beginning for peace and non-violence, and for following the way of Jesus," he said.

Widely reviled as a traitor throughout Israel, Vanunu has also incurred the wrath of the Jewish public for converting to Christianity shortly before he was kidnapped and subsequently jailed in 1986.

"I was baptized in Sydney and a month after that, I was kidnapped, so I have never celebrated Christmas before."

Since his release on April 21, Vanunu has taken refuge in St. George's Anglican cathedral in occupied east Jerusalem, where he is free to practice his faith.

VANUNU

For a man whose only link to Christmas has been watching the Bethlehem midnight mass on Arabic television in his prison cell, there is an almost childlike excitement in seeing the dazzling display of Christmas decorations at the plush American Colony hotel just down the road from the church.

"It's the first time I've ever seen a Christmas tree in real life," he admits with a grin.

"We're going to decorate the tree in the cathedral a week before Christmas and we're also planning to go to Bethlehem for midnight Mass," he says, while admitting it is unlikely he will get there given Israel's heavy restrictions on his movement.

"When I was in prison, I used to celebrate with tapes of Christmas music. People would send me thousands of Christmas cards and I would watch the midnight mass on Arabic television.

"From the start, my faith was very strong and I used it to protect myself from the Israeli psychological warfare," he said. "I survived in prison by proclaiming my faith." *AFP*

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Smuggling cools firecracker trade

BOCAUE, Bulacan—Pyrotechnic manufacturers in Bulacan, the country's firecracker capital, will not increase their prices to compete with low-priced firecrackers that are smuggled mostly from China and Taiwan.

Neptali Guballa, president of the Philippine Pyrotechnic Manufacturers and Dealers Association Inc. (PPMDAI), said smuggled firecrackers and pyrotechnic products worth at least P10 million are now sold in the country.

He said prices of smuggled products such as piccolo, pop-pop, trompito and double action have gone down from P30-P75 per box to P7-P9 per box.

Chinese businessmen from Malabon and Binondo were behind the proliferation of smuggled firecrackers, he said.

He lamented that manufacturers here are losing their business because Filipinos have been buying imported firecrackers.

"If the government would not help us seize the illegal products, we will lose our source of income," he said.

Guballa said local manufacturers cannot lower their prices because of the rising cost of raw materials they use in producing firecrackers.

In Lucena City, officials are planning to convert a vacant public cemetery as a market place for firecrackers to regulate their sale.

Councilor Rey Olivier Alejandrino, chair of the council's committee on peace and order, said the local government should no longer allow the proliferation of firecrackers without regulation.

On Dec. 31 last year, at least 20 people were killed in a fire started by a firecracker in the city market.

Alejandrino said the city government will no longer allow the selling of firecrackers and pyrotechnics on sidewalks and in stores in the city.

Firecracker vendors would be given space in the vacant cemetery. Families living there welcomed the proposal.

Authorities have been reminding people of the dangers of using firecrackers during revelries and sought a ban on these.

One of the most successful campaigns against firecrackers is found in Davao City, where Mayor Rodrigo Duterte continues to enforce a total ban on firecrackers. *Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk and Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

₱33M in agri projects turned over to farmers

COTABATO CITY—Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap recently turned over two agricultural projects worth P33 million to coastal farmers of far-flung Lebak, Sultan Kudarat.

Abusama Alid, agriculture director for Central Mindanao, said Yap turned over a P10-M rice mill constructed by his office for the Sultan Kudarat Coastal Federation of Cooperatives.

The project was funded through a loan under the Agri-Business Equipment Leasing Program of the DA Livelihood Corp. which is payable in five years.

Equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, the rice mill built in Barangay Barurao, has the capacity to mill two tons per hour and can benefit 2,000 farmers, according to Sally Rasalan, DA regional information officer.

Alid said the rice mill has an NFA-tested milling recovery of 66 to 68 percent for 11-month old *palay* and 68-70 percent for newly harvested *palay*.

"This is much higher than the industry average of 60-63 percent milling recovery," Alid said.

In Barangay Panso, also in Lebak, Yap turned over the P23-million Tran Communal Irrigation System to the Irrigators Association.

The project gets its water from the Pansud dam site in Lebak and services the villages of Purikay, Pansug, Taguisa, Tran and Barurao or about 1,000 hectares of rice fields.

The irrigation system is expected to benefit at least 715 farmers.

The World Bank, through the Mindanao Rural Development Program, financed the project which is payable in 27 years.

Speaking to farmers after the turn-over program, Yap stressed the government's commitment to help farmers increase production and profit and boost self-sufficiency in rice.

Sultan Kudarat is among the poorest provinces in the region but it is rich in natural resources. Lack of capital and government support in previous years made the land idle and its people poor. *Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

RESIDENTS of Infanta, Quezon trek with muddied feet to church to hear Mass. REM ZAMORA

Tragedy steals Xmas joy in Quezon towns hit by slides, floods

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

INFANTA, Quezon—Christmas is just another day for calamity-stricken northern Quezon, the environmental destruction and human tragedy mixing with the sound of Christmas carols and the lingering smell of death.

"Our Christmas now will just pass without a trace unlike in the past," said Yolanda Quinto, a housewife from Barangay Comon, Infanta.

"After that, we will just sleep and pretend the day was just an ordinary one."

She shovels mud in the family compound and her face is one of despair and helplessness.

"What we are praying for now is for the Lord to help us bring back our shattered lives. This is what we wish for Christmas," she said.

A bamboo bush behind her house stopped logs from destroying it, but she lost a source of income—a dry goods store in town.

"Even without the holiday food and the festive air, Christmas is still Christmas," she said.

The Dumagats of Sierra Madre do not celebrate Christmas.

"We don't need Christmas ... just to share to our fellow whatever we have," said Catalino Rutaquio, a tribal chieftain.

"But even if we wanted to, Christmas ... is now the least of our concern," he said.

"We cannot live on sardines and noodles forever. We have to work and feed our people from the sweat of our labor to regain our dignity," he said.

A young Dumagat leader, Ramsez Estuveza, thanked volunteers who gave him several packs of raw noodles, ingredients and bread, saying he would reserve the pack for a "special meal."

"We can rest our taste buds from the avalanche of sardines and noodles," he said.

In Real town, residents of Barangay Tignoan, which suffered heavy casualties in the landslides and floods, Christmas would be a very quiet one.

"We used to have nightly revelry during Christmas season. There were singing and dancing," said Mimi Escalante, whose house was only few meters from the the collapsed Repador Building where an estimated 100 people died.

"There will be no more festivities," she said as she watched her husband dig for salvageable metal they could sell for cash.

"Come Christmas, I will light a candle in the collapsed building for ... all those who died there," she said.

It is the children in whom the Christmas spirit lives on.

They lined the highways with stretched hands singing Christmas carols.

The sound of their songs mix with the sound of diggings and sighs. "Thank you, thank you, thank you very much, thank you," the singing went.

DOJ files murder case vs cultist tagged in lawyer's slaying

By Jolene R. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—The Department of Justice on Thursday filed a murder case against the alleged gunman in the killing of lawyer Arbet Sta. Ana Yongco before the regional trial court here.

The panel of senior state prosecutors found sufficient evidence to indict Michel Favila after conducting a preliminary investigation.

In a resolution, the panel did not give weight to Favila's alibi, saying the witnesses of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) positively identified him as the one who shot and killed Yongco on Oct. 11 inside her office in Barangay Zapatera this city.

Favila is detained at the Bagong Buhay Rehabilitation Center immediately after RTC executive Judge Simeon Dumdum issued a warrant for his arrest on Thursday afternoon.

Four witnesses, including a 10-year-old girl, identified Favila as the one who entered Yongco's office and shot her four times in the head, neck and cheeks.

Favila is a member of the Philippine Benevolent Missionaries Association (PBMA) whose "supreme master," Ruben Ecleo Jr., stands trial for parricide wherein the private prosecutor was Yongco.

Ecleo, who is accused of killing his wife Alona Bacolod-Ecleo in 2002, denied having a hand in the murder of Yongco.

Incidentally, Favila is represented by lawyers Orlando Salatandre and Giovanni Mata, who also serve as legal counsels of Ecleo.

Favila said he was ready to face the charges because his conscience was clear.

Favila said at the time Yongco was killed, he was in Barangay Talaga, Cagayancillo town in Palawan, attending a barangay assembly from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.

To prove his allegation, he showed an attendance sheet, a Sangguniang Bayan resolution and affidavits of residents in the village, attesting that he was present in the assembly.

Favila said the case against him was designed to link Yongco's killing to the PBMA and its leader Ecleo.

He said the CIDG was "biased," "unfair" and "lacked credibility."

Supt. Salvador Manga, CIDG chief for Central Visayas, said the CIDG did a good job and was ready for the case.

Witnesses also tagged Nestor Carrol, MSgt Heracleo Rallestan and Edgar Ardita as Favila's companions in Yongco's killing.

Boy, 5, latest meningo victim in Baguio City

BAGUIO CITY—Mayor Braulio Yaranon asked two senators to help the city government pay for a P1.5-million carbon dioxide incubator, which is a faster way to detect meningococcemia.

The appeal came as the Department of Health here announced the death of a 5-year-old boy apparently from the fatal strain of meningitis.

Yaranon asked Sen. Ramon Revilla Jr. and Sen. Jamby Madrigal to help defray the cost of the incubator and P1.3 worth of chemical reagents and laboratory equipment to help health officials detect meningococcemia, which has killed 10 people here and in nearby La Trinidad, Benguet.

The latest victim was a boy who died of suspected meningococcemia Monday night at the Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center.

Yaranon also sought more personnel for the City Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit (Cesu).

"The head of the Cesu for the past four years also happens to be the social hygiene physician of the Baguio health department. The other positions are filled by members of other departments," he said.

He said he wanted the Cesu to hire people with sufficient training in epidemiological surveillance and treatment.

The carbon dioxide incubator can hasten the detection of meningococcemia by incubating plates of secretions from suspected cases and by detecting traces of the meningitis strain. *Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

MNC with Batangas tobacco plant welcomes 'sin' taxes

A MULTINATIONAL firm operating a multimillion-peso cigarette manufacturing factory in Batangas province expressed support for the new alcohol and cigarette excise tax law signed last night by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

In a statement, Philip Morris Phils. Manufacturing Inc. (PMPMI) said the new law was a welcome development for the tobacco industry.

"We congratulate the President for displaying deft statesmanship and political will in enacting a law that sets a new tax structure for our products," the statement said.

"This is a law that strikes a balance between the fiscal needs of the government and the viability of the industry it wants to tax more," the statement quoted PMPMI managing director Chris Nelson as saying.

"As the second largest market player in the Philippines, PMPMI is prepared to assume its appropriate tax burden under the new law," Nelson said.

"Philip Morris is proud to be able to contribute in solving the fiscal problems of the government while be in a position to provide jobs to Filipino workers and livelihood to the hundreds of thousands dependent on the tobacco industry," he said.

PMPMI operates one of the largest cigarette factories in Asia in Batangas.

Nelson said the new tax law addresses the need of government for a steady stream of revenues for seven years while ensuring the viability of the tobacco industry in the country.

"Philip Morris is confident international credit ratings agencies would appreciate the hard work done by the Philippine government...," Nelson said.

ANNUAL TREK

Fewer tribesmen begging in Calapan

CALAPAN CITY—In previous years, Mangyans from the Bangon and the Buhid tribes would flock to the city at the start of the holidays. But, curiously, not this time.

"I just saw one Mangyan this morning when there used to be plenty of them in the past, with their children," said Gie Morales, church secretary.

"We really don't know, maybe they transferred location," she added.

Yawin-ay Giayan, acting chair of a provincewide Mangyan organization, said many Mangyans would usually enter the city.

"Maybe some went to Manila, others in Puerto Galera, Baco and San Teodoro, thinking that there are more gifts there," said Giayan, another Mangyan.

He advised people not to give Christmas gifts to the Mangyans so that they would not be used to it.

"But we can't blame our soft-hearted provincemates, so it's hard to eliminate this practice," said Giayan.

Giayan, however, said it was a misconception that all Mangyans ask for gifts on Christmas.

Only the Bangon and the Buhid tribes do, he said.

Elder residents interviewed by the INQUIRER gave some possible reasons for the absence of Mangyans in this city this Christmas.

They said those affected by Typhoon "Unding" might have remained in their areas while others might have feared misfortunes like diseases due to change in climate and exposure to dust. Still, others attributed it to the increased awareness of the negative effects of begging on their dignity.

"Maybe some fear (they would) experience what happened to a Bangon while crossing a street in Batangas and the death of another in jail after they were taken in for begging," said Joy Bae, administrative officer of the Mangyan Mission.

Reports reached Bae that a Mangyan got sick in Calapan and contaminated his community when he returned home.

"We really tell our fellow Mangyans to stay in their land and develop it instead of asking from people, which results in their being looked down on," she said.

She said about 50 Mangyans spent the night in their office.

"They said each of them had a different experience. Some got a minimum of P500 as gifts. Some said they were not begging but selling orchids and other products."

Some Buhid leaders resorted to soliciting gifts that were distributed in Mangyan areas.

"We are still looking for other strategies," a tribe leader said. *Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

INQUIRER Visayas

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Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Edralyn L. Benedicto

Ex-rebel wages chicken revolution

By Chito A. Fuentes
Tagbilaran City

"I WANT there to be no peasant in my realm so poor that he will not have a chicken in his pot every Sunday."
–King Henry IV of France, 1589-1610

A MAN who once fought in a Maoist campaign seeking to overthrow the government is now waging a silent revolution, espousing free-range chicken (not confined in cages).

It is not that Rubin Balistoy, 54, has suddenly chickened out after more than two decades of active involvement in the underground movement. He is simply enamored with the livelihood potential of Sasso chickens from France.

Sasso is an acronym for Selectiones d' Avecole dela Sartre et Sud Ouest or Selections from Sartre, France and Southwest. It was adopted as a trade name by a cooperative of native chicken growers in France.

Like most people who experienced life on the run, Balistoy is uncomfortable talking about his past in the underground, save for a few details. He once spent 10 months in a detention cell in Cebu but managed to escape when he learned he was due for shipment to Bicutan.

Like many young people who were incensed at the widening gap between the few filthy rich and the swelling ranks of the *masa*, Balistoy decided to offer his life to the revolution and was deployed to Samar, like many of the leading communist cadres at the time.

There, Balistoy made a name for himself, as claimed by military intelligence operatives, and was alleged to have been the leading cadre in Samar. Military sources claimed Balistoy was, at the very least, an alternate member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

This was the reason Balistoy's face, or at least what he was supposed to look like, appeared in posters of the country's most wanted CPP and New People's Army guerrillas, alongside with prominent communist leaders like Jose Ma. Sison, the late Rolly Kintanar and Rodolfo Salas.

'Chicken advocacy'

In 1992, Balistoy quietly came in from the cold and returned to Bohol. Although still active in advocacy groups, he is no longer identified with cause-oriented and militant groups.

While he keeps abreast with political developments, Balistoy is now more inclined toward livelihood programs, such as the Free Range Chicken Advocates (Freerca), which he founded, and the Bohol Initiators for Sustainable Agriculture and Development Inc. of which he is president.

Balistoy operates Purple Life Farms (PLF) in Taloto, Tagbilaran City, which started as a pilot farm on free-range chicken production in April 1999, aimed at firming up the viability of the enterprise.

PLF also sought to gain experience and achieve enough capability toward full commercial production.

"The plan was to start with a flock of 50 native brood hens and five brood cocks, but this did not materialize due to scarcity of good-quality native pullets and imported cockerels," he recalled.

Balistoy explained that six months after PLF was founded, it discovered that its breeding target of 50 hens and five cocks was not enough.

"To be commercially viable, at least 200 brood hens and 20 cocks are needed," he added.

PLF got some Taiwan Yellow, White Cornish, Barred Plymouth Rock, Black Australorp and Jersey Giant chickens from the Department of Agriculture breeding station in Cebu. By November that year, it bought 180 hatching eggs of Sasso chicken from A.P. Inocencio Farms.

"From experience, the Sasso breed approximates the qualities of native chicken, that is, resistant to diseases, hardiness and adaptability to our climactic condition," Balistoy said.

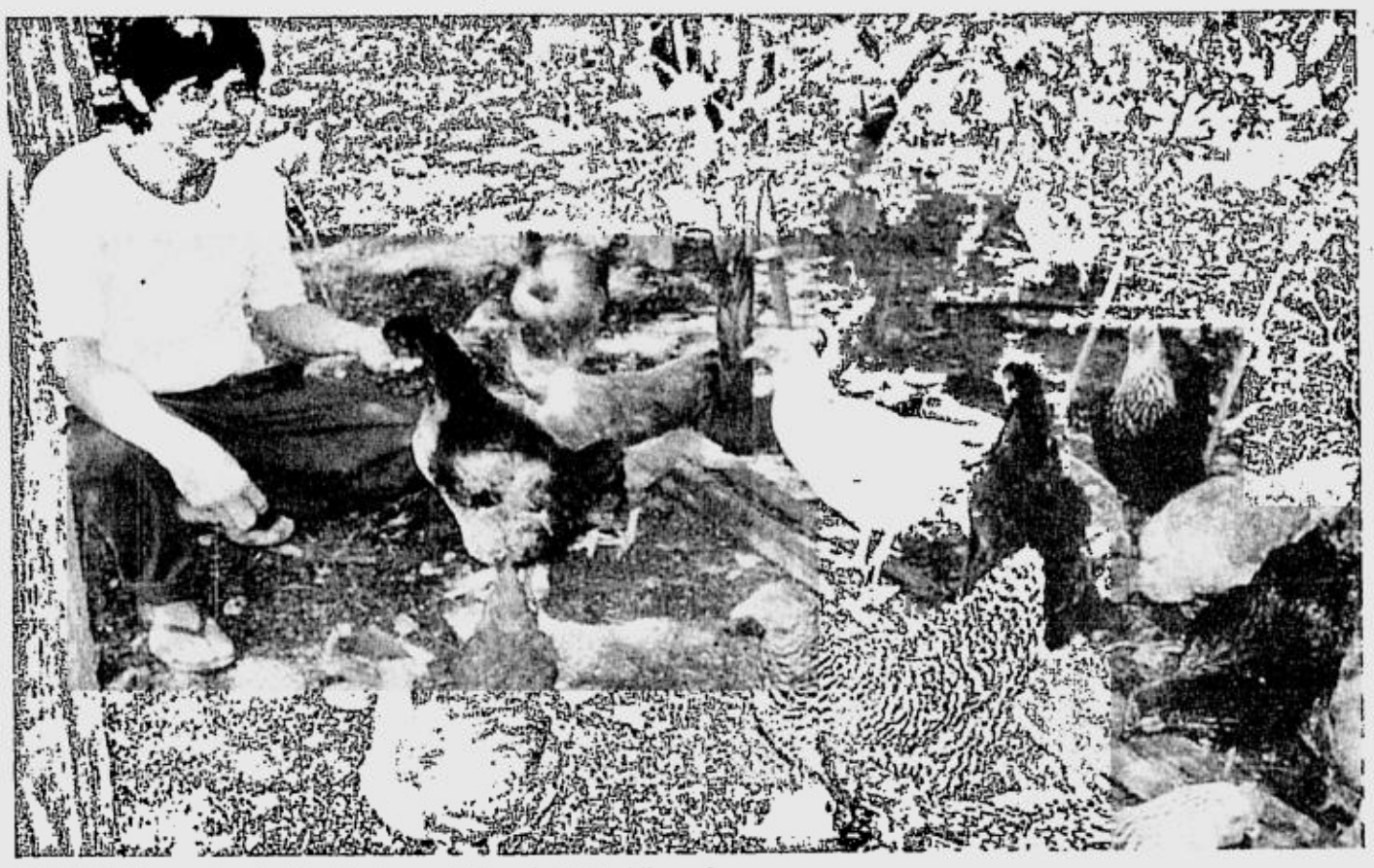
No fish meal

He explained that, in addition to their diet of green grass and insects, the free-range chickens were given a daily ration of feed mash that contained no artificial growth promoters, hormones and antibiotics.

"Animal-based protein, such as fish meal, bone and meat meal, dried skimmed milk and feather meal are not included in the feed mash," Balistoy stressed.

He revealed that fish meal was known to cause "fishy taste" in poultry meat and was a potential source of salmonella contamination, "while the others can cause tremors in the nerves with the advent of the mad cow disease in Europe and the avian flu outbreaks in Hong Kong."

In February 2000, PLF sponsored a management training program on Sasso chicken growing in Tagbilaran. It was at this time when Freerca was conceptualized.



RUBIN Balistoy enjoys feeding his Sasso chickens in his Tagbilaran farm.
CHITO A. FUENTES, PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

"The idea was to start with an informal association with those who actually raise, are planning to [raise], or are just simply advocating free-range chickens," Balistoy said.

He said the idea caught fire and described free-range chicken production as "a new enterprise with enormous potential."

By 2001, PLF ceased to be a pilot farm and established itself as a business enterprise. It now serves as a model in free-range chicken production and enterprise building.

Balistoy said the demand for Sasso day-old chicks and broiler meat grew. Soon, free-range chicken table egg production started.

"Theoretical knowledge on intensive poultry production, in general, and Sasso production, in particular, gained new dimension with the timely exposure at Viv Asia, an international trade fair on intensive animal production and processing, as well as the Sasso customers' meeting in Bangkok," Balistoy noted.

No love at first sight

It seems like a curious love affair between the domestic fowl and the one-time cadre who confessed it was not love at first sight between him and the feathery creatures.

"When I was a boy, I was traumatized by an angry hen which flapped its wings at me while protecting its young," Balistoy recalled with a laugh.

When he was growing up, however, he felt obligated to help his mother who was engaged in the chicken buy-and-sell business. Soon, he developed a fondness for chickens—enough for him to conceptualize PLF after his days in the jungles.

King Henry IV of France wanted prosperity for all, at least enough money in every household to put food on the table. He might have failed in this noble dream, but at least he succeeded in popularizing a cliché that is widely used to this day: "A chicken in every pot."

About four centuries since he ruled France, a Boholano is advocating an innovative livelihood program that, in a way, hopes to put a chicken in every pot. And it is not just any chicken. It is Sasso chicken from the France of King Henry IV.

If the Sasso and the livelihood movement in Bohol succeed in alleviating the plight of the present-day commoners of Bohol, it will be one development pleasing to the king. For Balistoy, however, this is one revolution worth dedicating his life to.

Bayawan marks cityhood with agri fair

By Alex V. Pal
Bayawan City

TWO THINGS keep Bayawan City in Negros Oriental alive—rice and the *tawo-tawo* (scarecrow).

No one seems to remember exactly when it started, but even before it attained cityhood in 2000, Bayawan had already made a name for itself as the rice granary of the province. Rice production is what mainly keeps this city of 105,000 people alive, save for some hectares planted to sugarcane and other cash crops.

So when the city celebrated its charter anniversary on Dec. 23, it feasted on the *baye-baye* (rice cake) and remembered the humble role of the *tawo-tawo* during a festival.

It was one of the few times of the year that the scarecrows came alive through the beat and performances of some of Negros Oriental's best dancers who had won national awards in street dancing.

On Dec. 6, the *tawo-tawo* dancers hit the streets to the tune of a bigger beat. In fact, everyone turned out to witness the big event, the plans for which they had so frequently heard about the past few months—the National Agro Trade Fair and Congress.

First time

The five-day fair was held in what was once a rice field in Barangay Villareal, which the city plans to transform into a bus terminal.

It was the first time that Bayawan held this event, which had the full support of the provincial government and the regional offices of the Department of Agriculture, and the Agriculture and Fisheries Council. The city government, headed by Mayor German P. Sarana Jr., spent P2 million for this activity.

"We want to position ourselves as the agriculture center of Region 7 and help our farmers learn modern techniques in raising cash crops," said Vice Mayor Rene Gaudiel.

Through this activity, he said, the city hoped to broaden the horizons of its farmers and be able to make full use of President Macapagal-Arroyo's Strong Republic Nautical Highway to freely transport farm products and other goods to Metro Manila.

Bayawan has also been working to improve a highway that will cut through the mountains to its sister city, Kabankalan, in Negros Occidental.

GMA praise

These efforts did not go unnoticed. The President, who graced the formal opening of the trade fair on Dec. 7, praised Bayawan for being "a model for food security and agricultural production."

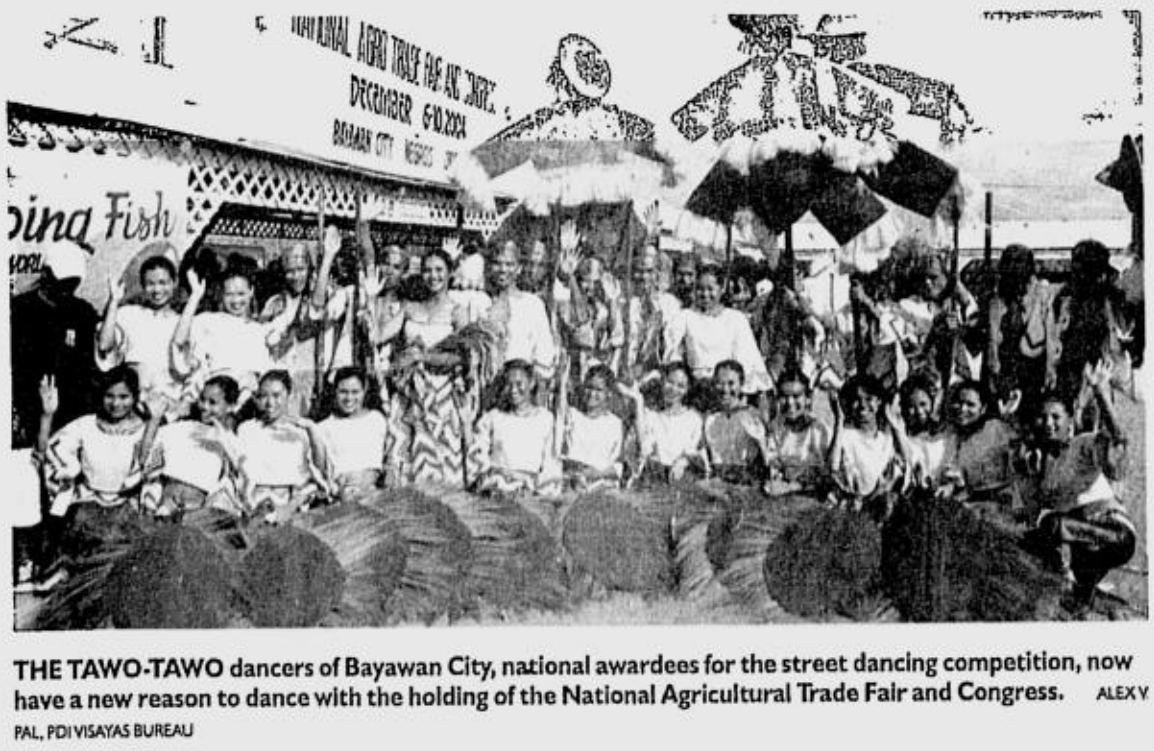
In her speech, she also noted that the city had allocated P5.8 million to support farmers who wanted to plant rice and other crops aside from sugarcane in the 70,000 hectares of agricultural land.

In fact, she added, Bayawan could turn the newly inaugurated 121-km Dumaguete-Siaton-Basay road into a "tuna highway" as its fishermen catch a lot of yellow-fin tuna.

After turning over four rice threshers and four corn shellers to farmer groups in the city and the towns of Siaton, Sta. Catalina and Basay, the President instructed Land Bank President Margarito Teves to allocate more funds for the country's agri-fishery program.

The other highlights of the fair were a rodeo competition and contests on fresh milk drinking, piglet catching, wood chopping, load carrying, cock *carambola*, bull riding, whip cracking, roping, banca race and fishing.

Lectures and demonstrations were held on such topics as meat processing, management of vegetable pests, production of essential oils and hybrid rice, the effects of aflatoxin on corn, market access, investment and tariff barriers, and a cold chain system for fruits and vegetables.



THE TAWO-TAWO dancers of Bayawan City, national awardees for the street dancing competition, now have a new reason to dance with the holding of the National Agricultural Trade Fair and Congress. ALEX V. PAL, PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2004

ISSN 0116-2642 INQUIRER Vol. 19 No. 17

Email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph website: http://www.inq7.net

OPINION

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THE PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER, INC. has its business and editorial offices at
•Chino Roces Ave corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City
•P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City
•Our telephone numbers are 897-8800 connecting all departments
•Editorial Fax 897-4793 / 897-4794 •Advertising 897-4807
•Circulation 527-3342 / 527-3348 / 528-0183 / 528-0186 and 528-0213 / Fax: 528-02-34.

•100% soy ink•

Publisher ISAGANI YAMBOT
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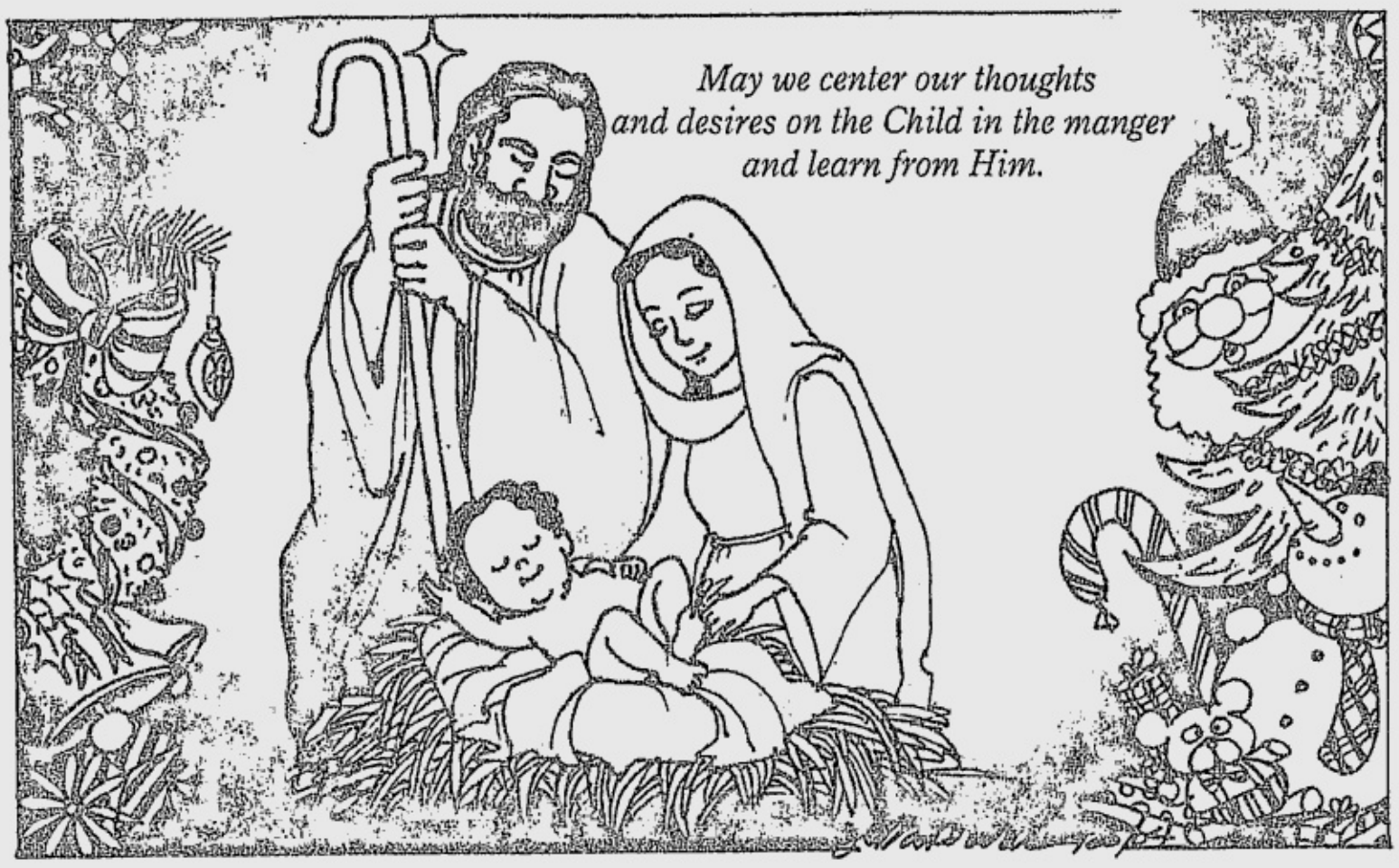


Merry Christmas to one and all!

CHRISTMAS comes but once a year but it is an event that should be celebrated every day. This is not an original thought, to be sure, but it is something worth repeating to remind us of the eternal message of the Star of Bethlehem. Dutifully remembered on this day by the faithful, it is soon forgotten with the dismantling of the festive lights.

The birth of the Infant Child was originally regarded by the Christian world as a spiritual reawakening to the righteousness that God expected of His mortal creatures. Peace on earth and goodwill to all men (and women and children too) was the lesson His Son had come down to this world to teach its sinners. Quietly proclaimed in the Holy Manger, it was to be scorned in the hill on Calvary but resurrected with the risen Lord. That lesson has yet to be fully learned.

Today, regrettably, the true meaning of Christmas has been debased with the crass of commercialism and the profit motive. It has become the quasi-religious excuse for the reverence of money as the new god of a congregation grown materialistic. Gift-giving has ceased to be the sincere manifestation of love, affection, loyalty, gratitude and goodwill to persons of simple grace. To many, it has become the expected and sometimes even demanded exhibition of reluctant tribute or plain bribery for questionable concessions.

O Christmas, O Christmas, to vary the doomed Madame Roland's lament of liberty, how many crimes are committed in thy name! How many sins are concealed behind the façade of generosity and joy that the day projects.

The law prohibits the gifting of public officials with expensive presents as compulsory compensation for past favors or hopeful inducements for future benefits. These are not allowed the whole year round but the Yuletide may be used as a convenient excuse for such selfish magnanimity.

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

Simple tokens of thoughtfulness are allowed to express the merriment of the season but not as gratitude money paid to the corrupt in hopes of their continued depravity. Baskets of fruits and canned goods, while innocent-looking enough, may conceal sinister efforts in the guise of generosity to poison integrity and weaken the will.

Gifts abound during this season of giving, but are they given from the heart as the true spirit of Christmas commands? The wallet can be a source of goodies but not of goodness. Lavish gifts—of cash, jewelry, foreign travels, cars, house and lots, and other bestowals from the rich—can provide immense pleasure to those who do not need it. But they become bitter taunts to those who beg for the bare necessities of life like food for their empty bellies, medicines to heal their wounds, clothes for their bare bodies, a humble abode in the crowded slums.

Happily, these somber thoughts do not enervate the true meaning of Christmas for the majority of our people even in these cynical times. There are still many of us who, regardless of age, believe in Santa Claus, of reindeer racing with the wind, of a reformed Ghost of Christmas Future with Scrooge no longer a spoilsport tightwad but an open-handed giver.

It is the children who are the true believers in Christmas. They still believe in the blessings of gold, frankincense and myrrh that the Wise Men gave the new-born Babe. And the happy thought is that many of us are still children like them, though the years may have wrinkled our skin but not our spirits. Like them, we believe that Santa Claus continues to dwell in the recesses of our faith and makes us not mere heedless hedonists but caring human beings.

Caring for the plight of others is one of the virtues of our race, and we are again proving it during these desperate days. Many Filipinos, from all walks of life, including those with little to spare for themselves and their families, are showing this with acts of charity and selflessness for the benefit of the victims of the disasters that have left them homeless but not hopeless. The typhoons may have deprived them of their belongings but not of their friends with their helping hands.

The men and women who grieve for their stricken fellow human beings believe that the unfortunates among us also deserve, as we all do, to enjoy the delights of Christmas as the birthday of the Lord. That is why many of them have decided to do away with their usual Christmas parties, or at least lessen the former extravagance, and instead donate what they will be saving from this frugality to the needy families in the typhoon areas.

This is a sacrifice that beggars the decision of the members of the House of Representatives to reduce their pork barrel allowances that, in fact, should be given entirely to the disaster victims. This altruism is in sharp contrast with the cupidity, the unconscionable cupidity, of the so-called representatives of the people.

Sorry if I may have dampened your enjoyment of this loveliest feast of Christendom, as it is described in today's homilies. Have I preached a sermon too? I apologize if I have, but my intention was to describe what I think is the real meaning of Christmas as it was proclaimed 2,000 years ago. It is to share one's blessings with others, especially the less blessed among us.

A Merry Christmas to one and all!

Can you hear it?

IN A TIME of lingering anguish and sudden loss, Christmas comes almost like an irrelevance. After the tempest of a divisive and long drawn-out election year, after the sorrow of unexpected death (those of entire communities, that of a popular Filipino icon), the longed-for day arrives looking like a lesser thing.

There is little relief, and less gaiety. Even the rich are burdened by a sense that the time is not ripe for a celebration.

EDITORIALS

But it is in times like these, when we seem to encounter the mysteries of Lent in the middle of Christmas, that Christians actually come closest to the true meaning—that is to say, religious rather than commercial—of the season.

In his Christmas message, Archbishop of Manila Gaudencio Rosales reminded us of an obscure but crucial axiom of the faith: "Christmas is whispering to us even in the darkness and after the tempest and sorrow are gone."

Indeed, to the Christian believer, the whispering happens even when the tempest is still howling, when the sorrow still runs deep.

Can you hear it?

Our response will be revealing, not for what it says about Christmas, but in fact for what it says about ourselves.

Loud and clear

TO MARY, the wearying return to Bethlehem for the imperial census must have seemed a less-than-happy time to give birth to the promised Savior of the human race. The inhospitable innkeepers must have seemed like more sorry examples of the race to be saved. And the terrified shepherds visiting "a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" must have seemed yet another reminder of the poverty that was all around her.

But it was Mary's gift—as it was the gift of the other two central figures of the first Christian season of Advent, the prophet Isaiah and John the baptizer—to see beyond appearances. In the literal darkness, in the midst of the homecoming tempest and the sorrow and pain of childbirth, she heard Christmas loud and clear. Playing host to a flock of shepherds so soon after giving birth, Mary yet received their astonishing angel-babble with grace. "As for Mary," the evangelist Luke recalls, "she treasured all these messages and continually pondered over them."

It is Mary's love for her Son that puts everything in perspective: the untimely pregnancy, the unwanted traveling, the jostling crowd, the fear of losing the Baby, the make-shift delivery room, the surprise, perhaps even unwelcome visitors. In the Nativity experience, she foreshadowed the essential teaching of her crucified Son. Love's sacrifice is redemptive.

This lesson is even more relevant to us today, when millions of Filipinos seem plunged in gloom or deep in the throes of suffering. The Manila archbishop, in his message to the faithful, suggests something we already know all too well: Grace comes even or especially from the afflicted, if they allow themselves to turn their affliction into love's willing sacrifice. "These people who have been touched by God's love in Jesus are capable of bringing peace where there is conflict, of building and nurturing fraternal relationships where there is hatred, of seeking justice where there prevails the exploitation of man by man. Only love is capable of radically transforming the relationship that men maintain among themselves."

"Touched by God's love in Jesus." This subtle phrase suggests what theologians call the economy of salvation. If we are in pain, and we offer our pain as a sacrifice of love (that is, as part of Christ's own suffering), our suffering redeems us, gives meaning to our lives, and ultimately saves us. This is the heart of the Christian faith. We are touched by God's love in Jesus to the degree we share in his self-sacrifice.

This is, thus, what Christmas is whispering to us amid the gathering darkness, in the middle of our tempest and our sorrow: Even in affliction, there is yet hope.

Faith and hope

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

THINK of the tragedy, injustice and hopelessness we have been witnessing, particularly those occurring so close to Christmas: the terrible storms that claimed the lives of hundreds of people and destroyed thousands of hectares of land; the unexpected deaths of Fernando Poe Jr. and KC de Venecia, mourned by millions because they were symbols of hope dashed and promise unfulfilled; the enactment of a tax bill that was a gross display of cynicism and self-interest by our leaders. Add the plight of people like Hubert Webb and Paco Larrañaga, who are languishing in jail for crimes they did not commit, as well as those who need, but will never get, the resources to conquer ignorance, poverty or illness.

I have written about these issues. I have written about FPJ, Hubert and Paco. I'd like to write a little about 16-year-old KC.

I didn't know her, but she has come to life from the stories of my daughter Tami, who was her drama teacher at the International School (IS). It was Tami from whom I first learned that she had died in the fire at the De Venecia home. "One of my students died in the fire last night," Tami told me, and her classmates were stunned and grieving. At her age, death is too far away to be taken seriously and is a shock when it comes. KC had also taken the Antioch weekend in our parish (a conversion experience designed for youth ages 15-20), and Antiochers old and new were devastated.

Six days before her death, KC and her classmates took their first-quarter exams in acting, which required them to act out scenes from a play, all of which were video-recorded. KC, like her classmates, submitted a journal recording her experiences and impressions in acting class. Tami recounted some of its contents, and we found ourselves laughing at her observations, and celebrating her zest for life and her cutting wit.

When someone like KC dies, when tragedy and injustice occur, the automatic reaction, understandably, is to ask, "Why?" or "What have we done to deserve this?" The bewilderment is even greater when this happens close to Christmas, as we celebrate the birth of Emmanuel, God With Us, and are reminded that "Nothing is impossible with God." It is as if our beliefs and our faith are being mocked. And since no satisfactory answer is immediately forthcoming, our faith is shaken and reproach or rage follows against an all-powerful God who would desert us in our time of need. How many people have made *tampo* (I don't know the exact English equivalent), or worse, have turned away permanently from God, crushed with disappointment and despair?

I confess to having been a hair's-breadth away from this despair and disappointment—and I am not even directly affected by these events. With everything coming within days of Christmas, it seemed that the Christmas spirit—the sense of hope, of peace, of being held in God's Hand—would elude me.

What saved me from going over the edge? Mainly, the Simbang Gabi, going to which, I find out, is not so much a sacrifice as an opportunity to touch base with our fundamental values. The reflections from the readings and the Gospel stories, the early morning walks to church help to set everything straight. One realizes that to be the recipient of God's love and favor, to obey Him unconditionally, does not entitle one to a bed of thornless roses. Just ask Mary, suffering from the social exclusion from being unwed and pregnant, or watching her Son being put through the slow, agonizing death that was the punishment of a criminal. Just ask God's only begotten Son, who went through the agony of anticipating what was to come, and the pain and humiliation of scourging and crucifixion. How can we expect better treatment, and then get mad when it doesn't come?

Or look at it from another point of view: He works through people (a face-to-face encounter with Him in life is not in the cards—even Mary got her message from an angel), and He gives us the gift of free will. There is the story of Pedro, who drowned in a flood after he had refused the offer of a truck, then a banca, then a helicopter, as flood waters rose, because he was certain that God would not let him die. When he arrived in heaven, he reproached God for abandoning him, and God exclaimed, "Who do you think sent you the truck, the boat, and the helicopter?"

Or consider that people die in mudslides and landslides because other people exploit the land mercilessly; people live in poverty and misery, because other people appropriate for themselves what should have been conserved or used to benefit the poor. In other words, we do it to ourselves. So why reproach God?

The bottom line, folks, is put very well by Lutheran pastor Mary W. Anderson:

"The Christmas story is nothing like the Disney fairy tales where all your self-centered dreams come true. No rags-to-riches. No happily-ever-after that the world would understand.

"Taking the Christ Child into our hearts does not guarantee our cancer will be cured, our jobs will be secure or our children will all be above average. We aren't wishing upon a star. We're being led by one. And that makes all the difference in how we understand our lives.

"Putting yourself in God's hands means trusting in the promise that God will work all things for good in God's way, in God's time, in God's economy. It does not mean we will always understand what is happening in us, through us, to us—or why."

A joyous, hopeful Christmas to all.

The Last Angel

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

A VERY Merry Christmas to all my readers! May the Peace of the Christ Child whose birth we commemorate today descend on all of us. May you all have many blessings from the Christ Child in this season of grace.

The year about to end has brought some tragedy to many people whether in their personal lives or as a nation, so that in this season, perhaps we need to have more stories that uplift the spirit. One such story I read was courtesy of the Anns of the Rotary Club of Makati, who were giving out copies at their Christmas bazaar last month. The Anns had put up a Christmas tree with little envelopes as trimmings, and as I passed in front of the tree, a friend, Chinit Delgado-Rufino, called me and gave me one. I thought it would make a perfect Christmas story for my readers. Enjoy this story of the "Last Angel" by Charles Sparrenberger:

"Leaving O'Hare Airport last December, I was seated beside a smiling woman in her early 60s. She was bound for Denver and I for San Francisco. Smartly dressed, she was holding the most beautiful angel doll I have ever seen. It was the perfect conversation opener, and by the time we reached her destination, I had enjoyed the most unusual story. Let me share it with you.

"Each Christmas, she told me, a department store in Chicago puts up an angel tree, a Christmas tree decorated with nothing but hundreds of white paper angels. On each of the angel the store has printed the first name and age of an unprivileged youngster in need of a remembrance of Christmas.

"Customers choose an angel, purchase an appropriate gift anywhere they wish, and return it to the store for free gift-wrapping and delivery on Christmas Eve. This woman noticed the tree a dozen times when shopping there, and each time she made a mental note to select a child's name; but as so often happens, she just never got round to it.

"Then on Christmas Eve one year, she returned to the store to find a last-minute gift. And there stood the tree, now bare. Well, not quite, for above her line of vision, toward the back of the tree, was the last angel. She stood on tiptoe, removed it, and read: "Cyndi, 3." Unless she moved swiftly, this child would not have a Christmas present this year.

"Hurrying to a nearby toy store, she bought an angel doll, the last in store and returned, only to learn that, although the clerk would gladly gift-wrap the toy, it was too late to have it delivered. But the clerk gave her the child's address, and she was soon on her way across town to deliver the present.

"As she approached the neighborhood she sought, the woman noticed the houses were increasingly dilapidated. The address proved to be a one-room shack in the rear of the last house on a dead-end street. Walking up the sidewalk, she noticed that no one had made tracks in the previous night's snowfall. She knocked on the broken door and waited, but there was not a sound from within.

"Knocking again, she heard a child begin to cry. The force of her knock had pushed the door ajar, and she saw a child—soiled and dirty—standing beside an unmade bed. A single light bulb, hanging from the ceiling, dimly lit the cold, bare room.

"The pathetic sight compelled her to enter, and there on the floor behind the table, lay a woman. She bent down and realized in an instant that the woman was dead. She panicked.

"Her first thought was to close the door and run...but someone might have seen her enter the shack. And the clerk in the department store knew she was delivering the gift. So the woman unwrapped the doll, and she gave it to the child, who cuddled it and stopped crying. Then she ran down the block to a grocery store and called the police.

"They arrived shortly; the officers estimated that the child's mother had been dead more than eight hours. While the woman comforted the child, the officers discussed what agencies should be contacted, and whether a place could be found for the little girl to stay this late on Christmas Eve.

"Suddenly the woman had an idea. Why not take the child home? In arguing her case, she was so persuasive the officers agreed to cut the red tape and arrange for her to have temporary custody for the holiday weekend.

"It proved to be the most wonderful Christmas she and her husband ever had. They had no children and their families lived out of state; they were planning to spend Christmas alone.

"Late Monday a social worker arrived and reported that the authorities had been unable to discover who the child was. There was nothing in the shack or on the woman's person to identify her. None of the neighbors had ever talked to the child or her mother in the two months they had lived there.

"My new friend's prayers were answered when the social worker agreed to let her keep the child while the search for relatives continued. A year later the woman and her husband adopted Cyndi, who by then had become the focus of their lives.

"As we sat together and talked, the woman told me that today Cyndi was grown up and happily married, with a three-year-old daughter of her own, who was also named Cyndi. The woman, now a widow, was flying to spend Christmas with them in Denver. She was bringing the angel doll for her granddaughter; it had been the last one in the store."

The moral of the story, it's obvious, is that any good one does for one's fellow man redounds to one's self. It should be pointed out that the Anns of the Rotary Club of Makati have decided to continue the "Last Angel" Project for underprivileged children from several impoverished barangays in Makati.

Christmas hopes

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

SHORTLY before my sister Neneng passed away last July, her daughter Dada, who is based in Seattle, found out she was pregnant. This indeed was happy news, for Dada and her husband Todd had been trying for years to get pregnant. But the good tidings were tempered by the news about her mother. Dada was due for her first visit to an obstetrician when she was summoned to her mother's side here. Fortunately, her sister Fani is an ob-gyn, and so took it upon herself to monitor Dada's condition, diet and activity while they were here.

Fani, on the other hand, was still technically a "honeymooner" with her husband Jonathan, having gotten married in Arizona just last May. Since they are both in their mid-30s, and Jonathan is an American, we didn't want to put any undue pressure on them and so refrained from nagging them about any plans for a child, as we would no doubt have done with home-based and younger newlyweds.

At the memorial service for Neneng, Dada read a letter to her unborn child, calling the baby "Babycakes," which was her mother's own pet name for her. A wave of sadness and regret washed over me at that moment, realizing that Neneng would no longer be around to see her daughters' children. Knowing Neneng, and how she hankered for the company of her *apos* by her sons Rommel and Dennis, I was sure she would have savored being with Fani's and Dada's kids. There's a Filipino saying that goes: "When your son gets married, you lose him to his new family; but a daughter is yours forever."

Just recently, Jonathan sent all of us an e-mail note announcing that Fani was pregnant. There was rejoicing all around. With Dada due to give birth around the first quarter of 2005, and Fani due in July, our extended family suddenly has a bumper crop of babies!

There's a local superstition that when an older person dies, a baby will soon be born to take his or her place. This gives us, Neneng's family, a measure of comfort. Neneng lived life in such a big way that, we like to think, it will take two new people to fill up the void she has left.

* * *

MY own "family of choice," a group of women I have known since college, is also undergoing a life-changing phase. Poti, son of my good friend Sandra Puno, is getting married in January. Poti and his bride-to-be Trisha have been generous enough to include Sandra's friends in the guest list. We have even been invited to the bridal shower! (I wonder, though, if they realize what sort of hussies we turn into once a little alcohol enters our systems!)

Poti is the first offspring of the "Media Girls" to tie the knot. And if knot-tying is taking place, can nappy changing be far behind? The thought fills us with anticipation, though what sort of "Sex and the City" grandmotherly gals we will be is a thought too provocative, or pathetic, to contemplate.

To a woman, we—Sandra, Peachy Yamsuan, Jess de la Cruz and I—have declared that we are ready for grandchildren. I remember environmentalist and iconoclast Odette Alcantara declaring that had she known how much fun having grandchildren would be, she would have gone straight to having them and not bothered with having and raising her children. Well, we did and do enjoy our own children, and don't regret a whole lot the hassles they put us through, but the collective feeling is that we've done well enough by them and it's time they reward us with the fringe benefits promised us.

Meantime, even as we contemplate grandkids on the horizon, our friend in San Francisco, Maloy Ramos Barairo, is struggling with day-care and child-care issues with her son Vince, who is precocious and truly precious. Come to think of it, Vince might well be the *kuya* to all our *apos*, and that way Maloy would have her revenge for all the ribbing we put her through.

There is another "media girl" in Los Angeles, Emma Coinco, who of all of us has the biggest right to liken herself to the "S&C" dames, being single. To her credit, she is the most conscientious of *ninangs*, and may in fact prove to be the best "mother" of us all.

* * *

ANOTHER death that stunned with its fierce suddenness (as if any death were timely!), before FPJ's and that of KC de Venecia, was Arbet Sta. Ana Yongco's. Arbet, if you remember, was shot dead in her home last October by a suspected hit man.

I had met her only once before, but she immediately imprinted herself on my memory with her energy and passion. Not all the pictures and video tributes her friends and family in Cebu have prepared for her could quite capture her undeniable presence, which lit up any room she was in.

Maybe that's why in the midst of their mourning and monitoring the investigation of her murder, all those who worked with Arbet are determined to keep her memory alive and honor her life in meaningful ways.

Last Dec. 9, her birthday, Arbet's friends and supporters held the launching and blessing of the Atty. Arbet Sta. Ana-Yongco Family and Community Wellness Center (ASY-FCWC) in Barangay Zapatera, Sikatuna Street, Cebu City. The next day, her colleagues in the Legal Alternatives for Women Center Inc. (LAW Inc.), of which Arbet was an officer, launched the Atty. Arbet Sta. Ana-Yongco Scholarship Grant for Alternative Lawyering. Indeed, Arbet, who took on what most other lawyers in Cebu considered "hopeless" cases, exemplified the bravery and dedication demanded of an "alternative" lawyer.

To find meaning in a friend's death, and realize that life consists of phases, and earthly life itself is simply a preparation for eternal life. To see that while some doors close, new doors will open and reveal secrets yet to behold. And that even as we sigh with relief and bid an emotionally draining year farewell, a new year dawns and holds out the promise of beginnings. Merry Christmas, dear readers!

Who named these guys Wise Men?

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

(Probably feeling sorry for the readers of this column since all past articles have just been too, too mordant, my niece thoughtfully decided to send in a 'Christmas' article by Dave Barry from The Miami Herald. Hopefully it will bring a chuckle—or two—to those who will recognize themselves.)

"CHRISTMASTIME is a festive time—a time of parties and presents and songs that we all love, except for 'Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer,' which I for one got tired of in approximately 1958, and which now causes me to dislocate my forefinger stabbing the car-radio button. I prefer traditional Christmas carols, such as 'Ding Dong Merrily on High.' I am not making this carol up. The lyrics are: 'Ding dong merrily on high!' (Something something something)

"I don't know the rest, because I never got past the first line without cracking up. (*BH: That's men for you; I don't know of many women who'd have the same reaction.*) This song used to absolutely slay me and my boyhood friends when we sang it in St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Armonk, NY. And no wonder: It is a well-known axiom of music, discovered in 1783 by Mozart (this was Herb Mozart), that 'there is no such thing as a bad song that has 'ding dong' in the title.' Other examples are 'Ding Dong the Witch is Dead' and 'Shama Lama Ding Dong,' which is not to be confused with 'Rama Lama Ding Dong,' also an excellent song. (*BH: See, what did I tell you about their sense of humor?*)

"But getting back to Christmas: My point is that, although this is a festive time of year, it can also be a difficult and stressful time for a certain group—a group whose needs, all too often, are overlooked in our society. That group is: men. (*BH: Not sure if this applies to us. We have a matriarchal society masquerading as a macho one, so there's a lot of pretense.*)

"Why is the Christmas season so hard on men? There are many complex reasons, by which I mean: women. (Doesn't this remind you of Adam excusing himself to God?)

"This problem dates back to the very first Christmas. We know from the Bible that the Wise Men showed up in Bethlehem and gave the Baby Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Now, gold is always a nice gift, but frankincense and myrrh—at least according to my dictionary—are gum resins. Who gives gum resins to a baby?

"The answer is: men. The Wise Men, being men, didn't even START shopping for gifts until the last minute, when most of the stores in the greater Bethlehem area were closed for Christmas Eve. The only place still open was Big Stu's House of Myrrh.

"So the Wise Men showed up at the manger, handed their baby gifts to Mary, and headed for the eggnog. Mary looked at the gifts—which were not wrapped, nor were they accompanied by cards—rolled her eyes, tossed the gum resins to the goats (who ate them) and said: 'Next Christmas, we are going to have some gift-giving rules.'

"But the Wise Men didn't hear her, because by then they were over by the crib trying to teach the Baby Jesus to pull their finger.

"This is basically how things stand today. At this point in the Christmas season, your standard woman has already purchased and wrapped thoughtful gifts for approximately 600 people, including her children, her relatives, her friends, her husband's relatives, her co-workers, the children of her friends, relatives of children of her friends, co-workers of friends of her relatives, husbands of her co-workers' relatives' friends, etc. She has also purchased several thoughtful gifts for nobody in particular, so she will not be in the horrifying position of receiving a gift from somebody for whom she does not have a retaliation gift.

"In contrast, your standard man, at this point in the Christmas season, has purchased zero gifts. He has not yet gotten around to purchasing an acceptable gift for his wife for LAST Christmas. He did give her something last year, but he could tell by her reaction to it that she had not been dreaming of getting an auto emergency kit, even though it was the deluxe model with booster cables and an air compressor. Clearly this gift violated an important rule, but the man had no idea what this rule was, and his wife was too upset to tell him.

"And now ANOTHER Christmas is looming, and this man, terrified that he will screw up again, has been wracking his brain for gift ideas for his wife. Nothing automotive this time: He won't make THAT mistake again! He's thinking Weed Whacker.

"But he's not sure. He's a nervous wreck. A lot of us men are. That's why we buy gifts at the very last minute, or, optionally, never. It's not that we're thoughtless jerks! Well, OK, thoughtless. But not jerks! We're doing our best to get through a stressful season. So on behalf of all men, I ask all you women to cut us some slack; and accept us for the imperfect beings that we are compared to you; and above all, in the spirit of another great Christmas carol, bring us some figgy pudding."

* * *

Comments to bambiharper@yahoo.com

Christmas changes

YOUNG BLOOD

Tonton Umali

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

I USED to wonder what the fuss with Christmas was all about.

I'm quite cynical already even at my young age. I don't understand why news anchors and radio deejays excitedly make a countdown to Christmas. I cringe when the radio plays those cheesy Christmas songs and frown as I watch our neighbors put up the biggest and brightest Christmas lights on their front gates while their kids stand to one side, hooting excitedly. I concur silently yet vigorously, when I overhear world-weary people mutter, "*Pambata lang ang Pasko.*" I smirk as I watch my little cousins hang their socks with their gift lists on the wall and badger my aunts and uncles as to when Santa would finally come.

I don't understand especially why people start anticipating Christmas as early as September. Three whole valuable months just spending, anticipating and preparing for that one day. People seem to think something miraculous, life-changing and earth-shaking, something deeply profound, memorable and thrilling would happen on Christmas Day. But what it is, I wonder. I've been through 20 Christmases already and so far nothing of the sort has ever happened. After the last gift has been opened, the last slice of ham has been eaten, we all go back to the harshness of the real world, to the dreariness of our lives. To rising prices, to the poverty of most of our countrymen, to selfish public utility workers staging strikes left and right and wreaking havoc on commuters in the process, to an ineffective government, to personal problems. People and things remain the same. Nothing and no one changes. Nothing new has happened. Christmas is just a temporary escape, or the biggest scam of all for successfully conning us into believing something bigger, better and brighter will happen on this day.

I didn't use to be a Scrooge. As a child, I believed in Santa. I made lists for Santa to read. I kept my temper and restrained myself from answering back to my sisters starting the first day of December lest Santa be displeased and not give me the presents I wanted. I loved to wake up on Christmas Day, eager to unwrap my presents and enjoy the feast my mother had prepared. Once, when I was 8 or 9, and it was two days before Christmas, my parents put me and my two sisters to bed and told us to sleep already. They closed the door and turned out the lights but I couldn't sleep for sheer excitement. My sisters were horsing around in the darkness and I wanted to tell them to quiet down because I swore I could really hear Santa's reindeer's hoofs on our rooftop.

As a 12-year-old, I spent my Christmas in my mother's hometown for the first time. I attended and enjoyed the huge clan reunion. My older cousins and I formed a *barkada* of sorts and we were together all the time, playing, exploring or just hanging out. I also went caroling for the first time. That was a fun, heady Christmas for me.

I don't know what happened since then. I must have grown tired of the whole shebang that is Christmas. I experienced some changes. I found out that Santa was actually my parents being extra-generous with their money (something like dull resignation descended upon me when I realized there really was no Santa). I graduated and stopped going to Christmas class parties and gift-giving. The yearly clan reunion degenerated into something of a tired routine for me. I loathed being uprooted from the comforts of home for a precious few days of my Christmas vacation to travel 10 whole hours to my mother's hometown for the family reunion to mostly sit like a log and politely refuse over and over and over again my relatives' coaxing to join in the dances and parlor games.

My disenchantment with Christmas got to a point where I found myself sitting beside my bedroom window one night, staring out into the darkness at the bright, sparkling Christmas decorations on our neighbors' houses and feeling an incredible melancholy wash over me. I positively wallowed in it, thinking with a sigh: "What are all these décor for? There's nothing joyful about Christmas. I am not happy at all."

My whole attitude changed one night while I was stuck in traffic inside an FX taxi. I was watching workmen stringing up bright lanterns on the street posts when I heard their laughter and banter. The passenger beside me was smiling as she looked at a star-shaped lantern. Only moments earlier, she had been wearing the expression of one who just had the toughest day at work and gotten a severe scolding from the boss. It struck me then that putting up Christmas décor made for a joyful experience and brought out the child in all of us. Sometimes it gets tiring to be an adult and to have to deal with all the responsibilities that come with being one. Seeing those Christmas décor after a hard and busy day somehow lifts up our spirits.

Then the taxi passed a *sari-sari* store displaying a colorful streamer wishing one and all a merry Christmas. For no reason at all, the word "Christ" jumped at me. Then I realized that Christmas was, is and should be all about Christ, about His birth into this world, about His coming to be with us and His saving us from sin. Christmas was never about gifts or parties or Santa Claus.

I felt like a load had been lifted from my shoulders. I had discovered something fully meaningful and truthful, and yet it had been there all the time. Christmas is the birth of the God Who gives me peace and fulfillment when I am at my emptiest, the God in Whom I truly believe and Whom I call fervently and grasp tightly when I am at my lowest. For the reason alone that Christmas signifies Christ's birth and coming to save us, I should rejoice.

Now every time I feel empty and disheartened during the Christmas season, each time I feel like scoffing at or viewing wearily gift-giving, parties and reunions and bright Christmas lights (and the mood still comes sometimes), I tell myself not to feel this way. I do not allow myself to feel this way. I remember that Christmas is about Christ's birth, which is too rare, joyful and precious to squander on the blues. And then I feel happy and thankful. And it helps when, amid all the joyful and lavish celebrations, I take the time to contemplate His birth and its significance and say a little prayer of thanksgiving.

I used to be selfish and focused only on the commercialized, artificial aspect of Christmas. Thus, my depression and emptiness when the Christmas I knew changed, when I discovered that Santa wasn't real, when the gifts stopped coming, when the novelty of reunions wore off. Nothing superficial or artificial is everlasting and fulfilling.

Now I know the true meaning of Christmas is the coming of Christ to be with us and save us from sin. And so I will be happy this Christmas. I will enjoy this Christmas and other Christmases to come.

Tonton Umali, 20, is a Political Science senior at the University of Sto. Tomas.

'Holy Night' circa 2004

CLAIM this night,
The silent night, holy night of Christmas that pierces through
The noisy night, unholy night of the Empire.
The night of the Empire is darkness of capitalist globalization;
Its voice, the loud lies of big business, the jingles of their ads,
Fascist bombs and the shrieks of torture in prison camps.
Its night of unholiness envelops factories and slums and war-torn countries;
Denuded forests and unfriendly genetically modified farms;
Hungry children and refugees and the unemployed;
The sick and the lonely; you and me.
The silent night, holy night of Christmas breaks through the night of the Empire
And births light from light for us to see:
A Mother fascinated by newborn revelation cradled in her arms;
And a donkey of burden playfully displaying its profile for the Child of promise.
The night frames hope and joy for eyes long violated by imperialist media.
The deep silence sounds the song of Word-Made-Flesh
And Woman's heartbeat of life and love.
The night is a placard of prophetic protest and good news of future.
Enter the glow. Will it so.
Claim this night.

—FRANCISCO R. ALBANO,
Calamagui 1st,
Ilagan, Isabela

PHILIPPINE LETTERS INQUIRER

Gov't sellout of our natural resources

THE PEOPLE must be more vigilant if they must stop the sellout of our natural resources and sovereignty by the government.

Among those blamed by the Arroyo administration for the forest denudation that led to the landslides, flash floods and mudflows that came with the series of storms and typhoons were the indigenous peoples. But where would they get the chain saws and bulldozers to cut trees down? Would they destroy the ancestral lands that they have nurtured for centuries and generations? To this day, the government does not understand how deep the indigenous peoples are connected to their ancestral lands.

We have yet to see the government holding members of the ruling elite and high-ranking officials of the military and government accountable for disasters caused by big-time logging.

Meanwhile, the seven million hectares that remain of our forest cover are in grave danger, many of them already awarded to logging companies. In Aurora and Quezon, an industrial complex named the New Pacific Coast City, covers about 30,000 hectares. Three logging concessionaires have been awarded 106,254 hectares under a Timber License Agreement. In Mindanao, the logging firm Alcantara and Sons has been operating in an area of over 45,000 hectares, which is part of the Ata-Manobo Lumad's ancestral lands.

We also note the inconsistency of the Arroyo administration. Immediately after the calamities, it expressed its very serious concern for our forests, even projecting itself as an advocate of total log ban. Yet days before, it hailed the decision of the Supreme Court declaring the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 constitutional. This act gives alien companies 100-percent timber rights to as much as 80,000 hectares of lands for a single application alone. Since the government is issuing out more than 10 mining applications every year and, given that three-fourths of Philippine land is applied for by mining companies, the probability is that all the forest covers of mineral-rich lands could be wiped out in no time.

Meanwhile, it is us who get buried and drowned in flash floods and landslides. It is us who get displaced from our homes when big business come to dig and mine our lands. It is us who get poisoned by the toxic wastes produced by mining operations and geothermal plants. It is our songs, dances and rituals and our indigenous qualities that are degraded by commercial tourism. We have been the sacrificial pawns of the government's dismal obedience to globalization.

—DENNIS LONGID,
Igorot spokesperson,
Kalipunan ng mga Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas (KAMP),
48 A Mapagbigay St.,
Barangay Pinyahan,
Diliman, QC

Stop 'root scavenging'

SOMETHING is happening in the logging areas that I consider more disastrous.

I suggest that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources visit the towns of Famy in Laguna, Real, Infanta and General Nakar in Quezon Province. Along the roadside, one can find so many furniture made from roots of hardwood trees, such as, *narra*, *kamagong*, *yakal* and *molave*.

The furniture are attractive, and indeed they are very artistic, beautiful and exotic in the sense that each piece is one of a kind. I will not be surprised if they are exported as well. I am sure foreigners will find them very attractive and unique for we could be the only ones in the world engaged in this kind of activity.

Why do I say that these furniture called "*ugat-ugat*" is a far more serious problem? Because it is a form of scavenging. I don't think the "root scavengers" even need permits to indulge in this kind of activity in logged-over areas.

When a tree is cut, the logger leaves the tree stump, about a meter or two above ground, precisely so as not to disturb the soil. Pulling it out will eventually lead to the erosion of the soil which causes landslides and mudflows.

We have seen pictures in the newspapers of places swamped with thick mud-like quicksand. That could only have come from the "root scavengers."

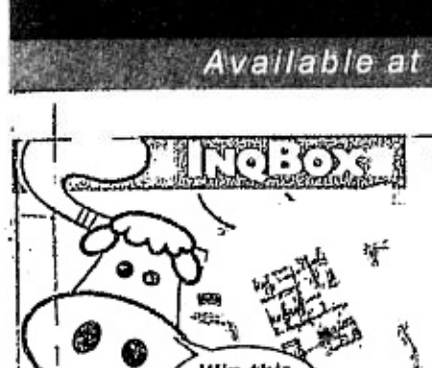
Tree roots are so huge and run very deep into the ground that to extract them people have to bore a tremendous hole in the ground. Imagine mountains and mountains potted with huge and deep holes. It is as if our logged-over areas have been blasted with dynamites, loosening the soil, ready to raise havoc in the next rainfall. Think of what those loosened soils can do once the rain falls. Mud would flow down the mountains and landslides would soon follow for the tree roots are no longer there to hold the soil.

We never hear much about these "root scavengers." We have heard of the "*kaingeros*" who burn tree stumps to make room for farming. But it seems they have since "graduated" from this activity to embark into something more terrible, more disastrous and more destructive.

"Root scavenging" must be stopped immediately to prevent worse flash floods, mudflows and landslides from happening in the future.

I only wish to call the attention of those who have never even thought of this killer activity.

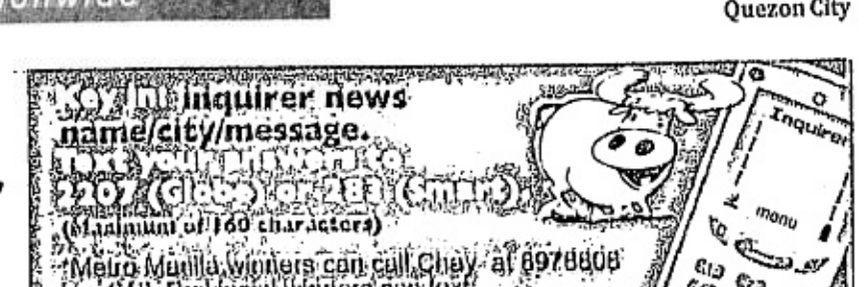
—MANUEL L. MORATÓ,
192-194 Tomas B. Morató Ave.,
Quezon City



Question of the Week

What are your hopes and dreams for your family this Christmas and the New Year?

Senders of d first 10 texts publishd in Tuesday's **INQBOX** *wil each receiv an "Inquirer T-shirt!U*



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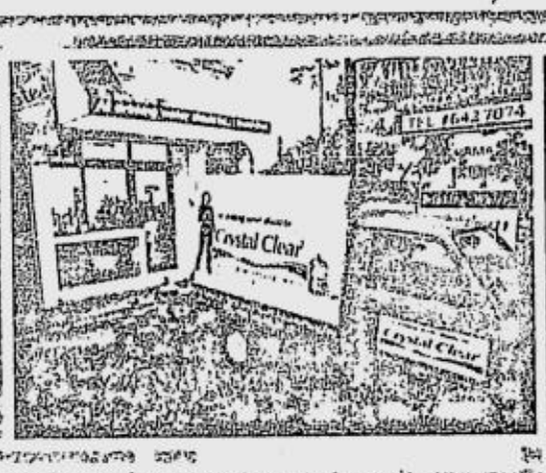

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- Casa Malvar Bldg., Malvar St., Singalong, Manila
- D&EM. Earnshaw, Sampaloc, Manila
- Enisha Condominium Dian cor. P. Ocampo St. Malate
- Villa Cruz Tower Pablo Ocampo Sr St .Malate Manila
- Mercurio St., Cor Dagonoy San Andres Bukid, Mnl.
- Oroqueta Sta. Cruz, Manila
- Cavite St., Sta Cruz, Manila
- Ma. Clara St. Sampaloc, Manila
- Zaragosa St., Tondo, Manila

QUEZON CITY
- Susano Road Novaliches, QC
- Liberty St. Cor 8th Ave. Cubao, QC
- Gaiden Square, Santolan Rd., QC
- Katipunan Road, St., Ignatius Village, QC
- Short horn St., Project 8, QC
- Blk30 Lot 7 Juan Luna St., New Capitol, QC
- ABS-CBN Sgt. Esguerra St Mother Ignacia St ,QC
- CO NO 5 & 8 cor. Irid St & Arayat St , Cubao, QC
- Evangelista cor Xaviervile Ave , Loyola Heights QC
- Don Antonio St , Villa Beatriz Subd., Old Balara, QC
- Kamuning Road, QC
- V. Luna Road, QC
- Sobrepeana St , New Manila QC
- Katipunan Ave , Blue Ridge, Q.C
- San Francisco Del Monte, QC
- Timog Ave , QC
- Mindanao Ave., QC
- Visayan Ave , Gales, QC
- Tandang Sora, QC
- Zabarte, QC
- East Fairview Park Subd., QC
- Kruz na Ligas, QC

PASIG CITY
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- M L Quezon St Lifehomes Subd Pasig City
- A/BIC P Burgos St San Jose Pasig City
- C Raymundo Ave., Tramo Pasig City
- Ramp STRATA 100 Emerald Ave Pasig City
- Sixto Ave Rosario Pasig City
- Evangelista St., Santolan Pasig City
- Price Smart Ortigas Ave., Pasig City
- Pasig Blvd. Ext Rotonda Pasig City
- Marcos Hi-way Santolan Pasig City
- Bambang, Pasig City

MARIKINA
- Shoe Ave Sta Elena Marikina City
- Parang Marikina City
- Marikina Heights, Marikina City
- SSS Village, Marikina City
- Tañong, Marikina City

SAN JUAN
- Tiffany Mansion Eisenhower St Greenhills San Juan
- N Domingo St Bo Batong Bato San Juan

MANDALUYONG
- Cityland Shaw Blvd cor. St. Francis St. Mandaluyong City
- Maria Clara St Plainview Mandaluyong City
- MDA Bldg., Maysilo Mandaluyong City
- Beacon Plaza cor Ideal st Shaw Blvd Mandaluyong City
- Brgy. Poblacion, Mandaluyong City

PASAY
- Mornington Place Taft Ave. Cor Villareal St. Pasay City
- Bonanza St. Don Carlos Village Pasay City
- Pildera II Ninoy Aquino Ave. Pasay City
- Taft Ave Ext. Cor. EDSA Pasay City
- Seaview Tower, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City

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- Kalayaan Ave Guadalupe Nuevo Makati City
- Magsaysay Ave. Unit 6-A cor. Monggahan St Guadalupe Nuevo Mkt.City
- G/F Campos Rueda Bldg., Urban Ave
- Bautista St San Isidro, Makati City
- Primo Rivera St., La Paz, Makati City
- Brgy. Bangkal, Makati City

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- M H. Del Pilar cor.,6th & 7th Ave.,Grace Park Caloocan City
- Phase 8, A Blk. 161 Lot 16, Bagong Silang Caloocan City
- Samson Rd Caloocan City
- Heronimo St., Caloocan City

MUNTINLUPA
- National Road Putatan Muntinlupa
- Laceg St Alabang Hills Village 1780 Muntinlupa
- Metropolis StarMall, Alabang, Muntinlupa

MALABON
- Mc Arthur Hi-way Malabon

BULACAN
- Pulo Drive Bulihan Malolos, Bulacan
- Cruz na Daan San Rafael Bulacan
- Mc Arthur Hi-way Brgy. Corazon, Calumpit, Bulacan
- Sta Elena Diagnostic Ctr Dr. Gonzales, Tibag, Baliuag, Bulacan
- Metro Gate Subd., Meycauayan

RIZAL
- F.P. Felix Ave., San Isidro, Cainta Rizal
- Torquoise St., Madriva Hills Subd., Angono Rizal
- Phs. 4, PFCI Floodway San Andres, Cainta Rizal
- Gertrudaz St., Brgy. Mambugan, Antipolo City
- Loules Prosperity Bldg., A. Bonifacio Ave., Cor
- Buen-Mar Ave., Cainta Rizal
- National Rd., Calumpang, Binangonan, Rizal
- Karangalan Drive, Karangalan Vill., Cainta Rizal
- Phs 1 St Michael Homes, Pantok, Binangonan
- Dulong Bayan, San Mateo Rizal

VALENZUELA
- Dubai St San Antonio Subd Dalandanan

LAS PIÑAS
- Macuja St., DBP Vill. Almanza Las Piñas
- CAA Rd. San Antonio Valley 7 Las Piñas

NUEVA ECIJA
- San Isidro, Nueva Ecija

PANGASINAN
- Villa Pozorrubio, Pangasinan
- Urbiztondo, Pangasinan
- Alaminos, Pangasinan

CAVITE
- Santan Road Sea Breeze Subd, Cavite City
- Binakayan Kawit Cavite
- Fiduline cor Carbon Sts.,Golden City Subd.
- Aguinaldo Hi-way Dasmarinas Cavite
- Red St., Camella Homes North Spring Villa Molino Bacoor Cavite
- JK Mata Street Rosario Cavite City
- Salitran Rd., St. Anthony Village Salitran 3 Dasmarinas Cavite
- Potente Bldg., Gen Trias St. Cavite
- C Katherine Cmpd Molave St. Dumasalang Subd Poblacion Imus Cavite
- Dra. Salamanca St. San Roque, Cavite City
- Ph 7 ACM Woodstock Homes, Alapan Imus Cavite
- Meadowood Subd., Bacoor Cavite
- Habay, Bacoor, Cavite
- Tirona Hi-Way, Bacoor Cavite

PAMPANGA
- 4th St., Paraiso, Sindalan San Fernando Pampanga
- Fatima Village Sta Cruz, Porac, Pampanga
- Sto. Rosario St. San Jose Angeles City Pampanga
- Mc Arthur Hi-way, 2009 Angeles City Pampanga
- Pamilaya St., San Matias, Sto Tomas Pampanga
- Brgy. Nueva Victoria Mexico, Pampanga
- Capaa Olongapo Rd., San Fernando, Pampanga
- Sto. Cristo, Masangsang Mexico, Pampanga

ZAMBALES / OLONGAPO
- Bgy. Rosete San Felipe Zambales
- Bgy. San Narciso Zambales
- Calapandayan Subic Zambales
- E. National Rd. Brgy. Rizal San Antonio Zambales
- Subic Bay Freeport Zone, Olongapo

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- Chairpaca St., Western Bicutan Taguig
- Severina Ave. Km. 18 Parañaque
- Barcelona St Merville Subd. Parañaque
- 8 Lopez Ave San Isidro Sucat Parañaque
- Kamagong St.,Multi-National Village Phs 4, Parañaque
- Concha Cruz Drive, BF Homes Parañaque

BATANGAS
- Makalinta Ave., San Jose, Batangas City
- Sta. Rita Batangas
- Mariouy Lipa Batangas
- San Miguel, Sto. Tomas Batangas
- Nasugbu Batangas
- Dizon Village, Lipa City, Batangas
- Bauan, Batangas
- Tanauan City, Batangas

LA UNION
- Bauang Commercial Complex Bauang, La Union

ABRA
- Poblacion Pidigan, Abra

DAGUPAN
- Zamora St., Dagupan City

TAGAYTAY CITY
- Crossing West Mendoz, Tagaytay City

LAGUNA
- Quezon Ave., Sto. Angel Sur Sta. Cruz Laguna
- Lopez Ave. Los Banos Laguna
- Ph 1 Golden City Subd. Sta. Rosa Laguna
- P. Zamora St., Natl. Rd. Lumban Laguna
- M Paulino St .Cor. M Leonor St San Pablo Laguna
- Tower 1 Paseo Country Market Tagaytay Hi-way, Brgy. Don Jose Sta. Rosa Laguna
- Rizal St., San Pedro Laguna
- Km. 60 Parian Calamba, Laguna
- National Hi-way Brgy. Pulo Cabuyao, Laguna
- National Hi-way, Sta. Rosa Laguna
- Paseo Subd. Banuc Cabuyao Laguna
- J.P Rizal St., Poblacion Cabuyao Laguna
- Tationg Hari St., Sta. Rosa Laguna
- Balibago Sta. Rosa Laguna
- Emerald St., Umali Subd. Los Baños Laguna
- Gen Luna St., Pila Laguna
- Maharlika Drive United San Pedro Subd., San Pedro Laguna
- Masagana St., Katapalan Homes, Cabuyao Laguna
- National Road Real, Calamba, Laguna
- Tagaytay Hi-Way, Pulong Sta. Cruz, Sta. Rosa Laguna

COTABATO CITY
- Goldfield Pawnshop, Don Rufino Alonzo St. Cotabato
- Episcopal Bldg., Sinsuat Avenue Cotabato City
- Quezon Avenue Midsayap, Cotabato City
- Roxas St. Kabacan, Cotabato

TARLAC
- Odonell Settlement Center, Capas Tarlac
- Teresa Commercial Complex, Tibag, Tarlac
- Santos St., Dalayap, Tarlac City
- AMD Bldg., McArthur H-way San Roque, Tarlac City

LEGASPI
- Imperial Court Subd. Phase II Legaspi City
- Zone 2 San Carlos Tabaco City Albay

SORSOGON
- Polvonsta Sorsogon, Sorsogon City

CAMARINES SUR
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SURIGAO DEL NORTE
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TACLOBAN CITY
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QUEZON PROVINCE
- J P Rizal St., Tayabas Quezon
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MASBATE
- Rosero St Masbate

MINDORO
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- Cogon Carmen, Cebu City
- Door #1 Dayson Bldg. Wireless, Mandaue City
- Holy Family Village 1 Banilad Cebu City
- Door 1 DCJ Bldg., #225 Rizal St. Ibabao Mandaue Cebu City
- Cebu South Rd. Cor. Dap-Dap Mambaling Cebu City
- PLANTATION BAY #259 A.Don Jose Avila St. Cebu City
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- Inayawan, Pardo, Cebu City
- Kinasang-an, Pardo, Cebu City
- Ayala Access Rd., Gorordo, Cebu City
- Kawit, Medilin, Cebu

DUMAGUETE
- Bolod-Bolod, Negros Oriental

ORMOC
- Lilia Ave., Cogon, Ormoc City

MT. PROVINCE
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BATANES
- Brgy. Kaychanarianan, Basco, Batanes

CAGAYAN DE ORO
- GF de Leon Bldg., Don Apolinar Velez-Cayetano Pacana Cagayan de Oro City

LANAO DEL NORTE
- J & P Bldg., Lluch Cmpd Tubod Hi-way Iligan

SURIGAO DEL SUR
- Tandag Surigao del Sur
- E.G.J. Bldg. Espiritu St. Mangagoy Bislig City

NORTH COTABATO
- Silverspoon Sudapawin Kidapawan North Cotabato

DAVAO DEL NORTE
- Teacher's Village Panabo Davao del Norte
- Emerald St., Sison Subd., Tagum City

SOUTH COTABATO
- Magsaysay St General Santos City
- Animas Bldg., San Pedro St. J. Catolico Ave. Lagao Gen. Santos City
- Pablo Bldg., Morales Ave., Koronadal City

TAGUM
- Emerald St., Sison Subd. Tagum City

DIGOS CITY
- Rizal Ave., Digos City

BACOLOD NEGROS / OCCIDENTAL
- Agan-agan Rd., Sibulan Negros

BORACAY
- Boracay, Caticlaw

DAVAO CITY
- SWSI - Davao
- Bacaca Rd. Davao City
- Door 2 Lacor Bldg., Elpidio Quirino Ave., Davao City
- J.P. Laurel Ave, Lanang, Davao City
- J.P. Laurel Ave., Davao City
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Red Cross brings 'noche buena' to victims

From page A1

your patron. This is institutional assistance," said Gordon, addressing the crowd in Real prior to the distribution of gift packs.

The senator stressed that the credit should go to the generous Filipinos and international donors who had funded Red Cross' relief operations in the province.

Children as young as 3 years old lined up to get their gift packs together with their parents, most of whom carried infants.

Not just 'pansit'

Twelve-year-old Roger Loba even sang the song, "I believe I can fly," to encourage kids his age to take heart despite their families' loss and sufferings.

Captain Red Cross was also there to entertain the kids.

Roger, who has seven other siblings, later told Gordon that the two plastic bags of gift packs he received would be his family's only food for noche buena.

Saved for *pansit* [noodles], he said they had nothing else on the table.

His father could not go back to fishing because most of the cut logs still littered the sea.

Erlan Paranan and Robimin Pante, both 10, admitted that they wanted toys, new clothes and a bike for Christmas.

"But it's OK. I still have my mama and papa," said Erlan in Tagalog.

Robimin, whose father died when she was young, agreed. She said she would rather have her mother, a market vendor, safe than get a Barbie doll this Christmas.

This scene was replayed in the next town.

Noche buena

When Gordon and his team reached Infanta, thousands of parents with their children in tow lined up under the midday sun.

"*Salamat po. Maitatawid namin ang pasko* (Thank you. We can now celebrate Christmas)," said Marilyn Yacub, 33, who has two young children to feed, besides seven other siblings.

Yacub, accompanied by a sister, asked to be included in the list of beneficiaries.

Save for some bread she got from previous relief packs, her family had nothing to eat for Christmas.

Unable to control her happiness, Yacub started to cry.

Her story was no different from most of the other residents of Infanta who either lost or nearly lost their homes. Most have lost families.

Yacub said she braved waist-deep floodwater to save a 3-month-old pig, to no avail.

"It should have been served tonight so we'd have something to put on our table," she said.

People care

Asked why the Red Cross had chosen to distribute noche buena gift packs instead of the usual relief goods, Gordon said: "The disaster has been unusual. A lot of people are depressed. We should let them know that there are people out there who care."

With children in mind, toys were included in the gift packs.

It was Gordon's third visit to these towns which were the worst hit by the recent four deadly storms.

"Some of them have lost their homes, some have damaged homes, some of them have not been able to go back to their fields. The important thing is for people to remember that there are people who think about them, that they're still important," he stressed.

He also exhorted the residents to move on, to try and maintain their dignity as human beings.

YES, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus, at least, to this little girl in Infanta, Quezon, as she carries relief goods given by the Philippine National Red Cross. ROGER MARGALLO

No carolers in Infanta; townsfolk still grieving

From page A1

Manila while those who have nowhere else to go are stuck here, but there is no Christmas," she added.

When the INQUIRER visited the town on Thursday, people were still lining up to get relief goods while others tried to empty their homes of mud.

The unwashed facade of houses showed muddy traces near to the the second floors, indicating the level of the floodwaters that descended on the town.

Saddest Christmas

At night, no groups of carolers broke the cold silent night with merry songs.

"Before the flood, there were already some groups who were starting (caroling). Some were even able to get permits from us, but I don't see them now," Glorioso said.

"Nobody would go caroling given the situation we have ... This is our saddest Christmas," she added.

She said she also expected nieces and nephews not to visit their godparents for the traditional gift giving.

"They understand. We have no money and those who received their pay spent it on paying laborers to remove the mud from their homes," Glorioso said

But at least, the others were lucky. They still have their homes and their loved ones.

Carpenter Lorenzo "Enzo" Astrira lost three of his four children in the deluge.

"We have nothing to decorate. Our home is gone,'" Mang Enzo said. He and his family now live with his sister.

"Maybe Christmas will just pass by. Then that's it," he said.

Two days before Christmas, Mang Enzo and his wife Amelia had gone to visit the temporary graves of their two children—6-year-old Lorie and year-old Normel—and were still looking for their missing 4-year-old son Lorenz.

Logs destroy home

The couple lost Lorenz when logs as big as coconut trees destroyed their home. Mang Enzo said that they were about to sleep that night when he noticed that floodwaters had entered their house. Worse, the floodwaters were rising quickly in just a matter of seconds.

The family went up to the roof but the waters continued to rise and boulders and logs started pounding their home.

"We were crying out for help. I tried to open the roof so that we could hold on to something but we were swept away when our house was destroyed," Mang Enzo said.

"It was only morning, around 1 a.m., that the waters subsided. The current was strong. Our only light came from lightning," he said.

Mang Enzo was able to get to the roof of another house while Amelia managed to hold on to a tree.

"We continue to search for Lorenz in the hope that he is miraculously alive. We hope we can just find him and give him a decent burial beside his siblings," he said.

Mang Enzo said he had not attended any of the traditional dawn Masses (*simbang gabi*) that were held in the last nine days before Christmas.

Father Boy said that the parish still celebrated the *simbang gabi* at 5 a.m. but most of the people who attended came from the barrios.

No 'puto bumbong'

Also gone are *puto bumbong* and *suman* because the town no longer had *malagkit*, the sticky rice used for these delicacies, which are eaten after Mass.

"We had only one rice cake vendor and I think the vendor came from Laguna. No one lingers after Mass. Some leave on tricycles," Father Boy said.

Tricycle driver Eustaquio Heniga also did not attend any of the dawn Masses.

Heniga, 48, said he lost 14 of his relatives in the storm and that he was afraid that one might show up at night if he went to Mass. He said the 14 were still missing.

The INQUIRER found Heniga and some of his relatives from the De Loreto clan building temporary shacks to house their families in Purok Pulo, Barangay Ilog, which is near the Agus River.

Their place is more than a kilometer from the town center and it takes a 30-minute walk over mounds of dried mud and fallen trees to get to there.

Some of the houses located on the way had been completely wiped out by the flood and the pathways had been erased. "I think we won't be having Christmas this year," he said.

Dependent on relief goods

Heniga said he and his relatives were just relying on relief goods to stay alive. They only had their sleeping clothes on when the flood swept away 24 of their 25 houses.

They had to borrow a shovel, look around for wood, and ask for nails so they could put up temporary shelters.

Heniga said he did not expect to have the spaghetti, salad, beer, *pulutan* and *pancit* that he and his relatives had feasted on last Christmas.

The three pots that he and his kin have were only given to them. And sometimes, they have to skip their meals when they run out of relief goods.

"How can we have *pancit* (noodles) when there's no frying pan," he joked.

He said he was also concerned about their children, who used to go caroling even before December.

"But now, people might get angry if the children visit. The simple joys of children to have new clothes and shoes are now gone," he said.

False alarm

Heniga said he feared that the flood would happen again. On Monday, a rumor spread that Army officials had announced that people should move to the evacuation centers because another flood was expected.

"We were really frightened and we ran as fast as we could. Those who were asleep were left behind," he said.

When they reached the town center, officials had to calm them down and tell them that there was no flood warning. Heniga said he and his relatives decided to stay there rather than return to their shacks.

"I just hope that my missing relatives are still alive. There were reports that some were in Polilio, Mauban, and even Manila, but these were not confirmed. We have no money to go there and confirm it," he said.

"We'll just stay here and try to rebuild our lives. And it's better here, we know each other. You pass by and you're offered some food. It would be different in Manila," he said.

Father Boy said he expected Infanta to recover after seeing those who attended the simbang gabi in the town and in the barrios.

He said the residents of the barrios that had electricity even before Infanta got its power back started putting on Christmas lights.

"And the dawn Masses I held there were well-attended. Before, we had to wait for them to arrive. Now the crowd just overflowed," he said.

Father Boy said that in the prayers read during Mass, his parishioners expressed their thanks to God for having survived the tragedy.

"They're very hopeful. I'm trying to make them hopeful but I think they're the one's who are giving me hope. I can see in them that this town will rise again," he said.

Alabang house boasts of 200 'belens'

From page A1

size of 5-year-old tots—comprising the cast of the First Noel.

"I guess this is how I show my appreciation of the meaning of Christmas. God chose to become human and have human parents because He loved us so much," Kalalo describes her joyful hobby.

The figurines in her collection are either obtained locally or collected from her travels abroad. Some are gifts.

"I started collecting for friends and relatives to see. Eventually, it became a kind of conversion—my realization of the humanity of Christ," she says.

Wannabe nun

Kalalo is a jet-setting corporate lawyer, who was once a ranking official of the Department of Trade and Industry and the Securities and Exchange Commission. A graduate of the University of the Philippines' College of Law, she obtained her master's degree from the University of Michigan as a Fulbright scholar.

Outside of work, Kalalo is an active member of the St. James Parish in Ayala Alabang, offering consultancy to the church's legal assistance program for indigent prisoners. She also heads a foundation caring for penniless cancer patients.

A devoted Catholic and still single, Kalalo recalls growing up in the family house in San Jose, Batangas, beside "the most beautiful church in the province." She once dreamed of becoming a nun, which explains her penchant for collecting religious items.

Though she never actually entered the convent, she befriended many nuns and priests, who would give her a belen or two each year, adding to her collection.

Pensive Joseph

Kalalo's Nativity figures range from abstract forms to realistic images to mechanical dolls. Some are made from what look like popsicle sticks, bamboo or papier-mâché. Most are made of resin, ceramic or terra cotta, while the more elegant sets are metal and crystal.

There are wind chimes, candle holders, bells, musical boxes, pen holders and paper weights with the Holy Family as motif.

There is a wall-mounted icon—an 85-year-old print lent by a priest—which hangs above the doorway leading to the dining room.

On a low center table, Kalalo displays her "most complete set" of 23 separate statuettes, complete with angels and sheep.

Other figures go beyond traditional Christmas imagery and convey deeper meanings. For instance, her newest piece—which comes from Peru—is a pear-shaped wood carving which, when opened, reveals not just a miniature belen, but also a depiction of the "Fall of Adam" as told in Genesis.

Another item—made in Venezuela and a veritable mix of metaphors—shows Mary, Joseph and the newborn Jesus in what appears to be Noah's Ark. Another item, this time from Mexico, has the trio perched on a "Tree of Life."

From Portugal, she has a belen which features a pensive-looking Joseph.

"He must be worried about what would happen to his family," Kalalo muses.

Polar bears at the Nativity

Another interesting Nativity scene is from Canada which has Eskimos, polar bears and penguins around the manger.

Asked which belen she would grab first in case she has to evacuate her house, Kalalo gamely points to two figurines, one from Rome, Italy and the other from Spain—a Lladro.

She has a number of Philippine-made items, but she is proudest of a 5-foot-tall relief sculpture made of wood which, according to the man who sold it in Pampanga, "was part of a door of a local church destroyed by lahar."

The massive work hangs next to her front door.

UN Nativity

About 60 percent of her belen collection were bought in local bazaars. The rest were purchased overseas, she says. From the costumes, facial features and skin tones, it's easy to guess which figurine came from Russia, India, Latin America, the Balkans and, yes, even Africa.

About a 10th of the collection were gifts from relatives and friends, with special mention of Fr. James Gascon S.J.

"They've started calling my house a 'cathedral' because they say I have more religious items than their convents," she says, laughing.

However, she doesn't know how many figurines she actually owns. "I have not really counted them. But they're definitely more than 200 sets by now," she says.

She reveals that it took her two months to unpack and unwrap all the pieces and put them in orderly display around the house.

After the holidays, she will need another month to wrap each piece in manila paper, put them in their assigned boxes before storing them in the attic.

The Christmas story

Because Kalalo wants to share the spirit of Christmas and its story, she set up a brightly lit belen in front of her house for motorists and passersby to appreciate. There is a signboard with a few words on Christmas according to Filipino Jesuit and historian, Horatio de la Costa:

"Christmas is when we celebrate the unexpected, it is the festival of surprise. This is the night when shepherds wake to the song of angels; when the earth has a star for a satellite; when wise men go on a fool's errand, bringing gifts to a Prince they have not seen, in a country they do not know.

"This is the night when one small donkey bears on his back the weight of the world's desire and an ox plays host to the Lord of heaven. This is the night when we are told to seek our King not in a palace but in a stable; and although we have stood here, year after year, as our fathers before us, the wonder has not faded nor will it ever fade; the wonder of that moment when we push open the little door, and enter, and entering, find in the arms of a Mother who is a Virgin, a Baby who is God."

Bonus in February for 1.2-million gov't employees

From page A1

He said Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin had guaranteed the cash gift upon instructions by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The government's failure to give the traditional cash gift this Christmas could be one of the reasons that government employees were not cheerful, according to Bunye.

"We expect a happier Christmas in 2005—prices of crude are going down and the economy is picking up," he said in reaction to the results of a survey by Social Weather Stations.

The survey, conducted from Nov. 23 to Dec. 2, found that fewer adult Filipinos (64 percent) are looking forward to a merry Christmas today compared with the 77 percent in 2003 and 82 percent in 2002.

SWS said 10 percent of the respondents were expecting a sad Christmas today, up from 3 to 4 percent in 2002 to 2004.

Moreover, people pessimistic about their prospects next year outnumber those who are optimistic. Thirty percent expect their quality of life to get, while 25 percent expect their quality of life to improve next year.

Unbelievable but true

Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said the findings of the SWS survey were "unbelievable but true" given the recent tragedies and dark clouds looming on the horizon.

"Despite the difficulties crashing their way in the new year and the tragedy that came one after the other, and yet when the sun comes out, Filipinos still look at the bright side of things," he said in a phone interview.

Recently, the country was battered by typhoons that killed more than a thousand people and destroyed billions of pesos worth of property, infrastructure, crops and livestock in Luzon particularly in Quezon, Aurora and Nueva Ecija.

Pimentel said the new year would bring higher power and water rates and higher prices of basic commodities.

Communications Director Silvestre Afable blamed the growing unhappiness this season to lower government spending and the debilitating impact of the disasters that struck the country.

"But Filipinos have an indomitable spirit when it comes to Christmas. All we need is simple food on the table and the whole family to bring good cheer," said Afable in a text message to the INQUIRER.

"It is the spirit of Christmas that counts and not the polls," he said.

Part of painful reforms

Malacañang appears to have taken the growing dissatisfaction among Filipinos as part and parcel of the painful reforms it has undertaken this year—cutting down on frivolous expenses and raising government fees—to keep the fiscal house in order.

In her 2004 State of the Nation Address, Ms Arroyo said that Filipinos "must bear the pain and share the pain to enjoy the gain together."

Malacañang is confident that the reforms it has so far undertaken this year will start bearing fruit next year.

"There will be more resources available for health and education as a result of the fiscal measures. We expect more jobs as a result of better investor confidence," said Bunye in a text message to the INQUIRER.

In the interview aired over the radio, Bunye said the President had decided to give the cash gift on Valentine's Day because employees whose agencies had no savings would not get it for this Christmas.

Bunye said the amount of the cash gift would be "the same" as what was traditionally received by government employees.

Civil servants get an additional P5,000 cash gift on top of the mandated one-month Christmas bonus and P5,000 cash gift, which was given in two installments in June and this December.

Incentive

Boncodin confirmed an "incentive" was forthcoming but clarified that the amount would depend on the capability of the agencies.

"The amount is not yet sure because we have to make sure it's available for everyone," Boncodin said in a phone interview.

She explained that the government was really hard up in giving an additional cash bonus to workers this Christmas.

Boncodin said if the cash gift were given this month, not all workers would get them, particularly the Department of Education, which accounts for half of the 1.2 million state workers.

"That would be unfair and that is also the consensus in the Cabinet," she said.

Boncodin said the President asked her to "study the possibility" of giving some kind of incentive to government workers next year.

"I still don't know if it should be called a bonus but it will be for 2005," she said.

The budget secretary said agencies should provide for this incentive in their 2005 budget.

Boncodin said the incentive was in order because the last salary increase for workers in the public sector was in 2001. "It's really time to give some incentives. It's like saying 'thank you for cooperating [with the President's austerity program],'" she said.

Boncodin said that because different sectors heeded the President's call for austerity and fiscal reforms, the government was looking forward to meeting the budget deficit target of P184 billion this year. *With a report from Christine O. Avendaño*

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Editor Ester G. Dipasupil ■ Assistant Editor Cenon B. Bibe

STAR WATCH
"Happy Together" cast (from left) Mark Herras, Jennylyn Mercado, Yasmien Kurdi, Kris Aquino and Erik Quizon wave to fans who turned out yesterday to watch the Parade of Stars that toured the city, marking the start of the 30th Metro Manila Film Festival. VAL HANDUMON

Back to normal at Pius XII

By Leila B. Salaverria

IT IS a happy Christmas for workers of the Pius XII Catholic Center after all.

The workers, who went on strike on Dec. 13 after talks for the collective bargaining agreement fell through, agreed to a compromise with the center's management on Dec. 20 and returned to work on Dec. 22.

"Everything is back to normal," said Nicolas Oribe, president of the Pius XII Catholic Center Employees Association.

Oribe had said earlier that the employees were prepared to spend Christmas in the streets if further talks between the employees association and the management would fail.

According to Oribe, the strike was declared over when the union and the Board of Trustees agreed that the board would give the employees the equivalent of two year increases. The agreement was reached in a meeting at the labor department's mediation office on Monday.

The increases had been withheld after it became the subject of a court case when the management appealed the amount.

This case was apart from the most recent CBA negotiations where the employees had protested the P100 a month increase that the management offered, citing lack of resources.

The back increases amount to P1,400 a month, entitling workers to more than P30,000 plus adjustments for 13th-month and overtime pay.

In exchange, the workers agreed to a one-year moratorium on increases and on strikes.

"We are happy that the employees and management were able to come to an agreement. The experience has been an eye-opener for both sides," Oribe said.

Keepers of odd jobs not home for Xmas

By Ruth L. Navarra

WHAT would Christmas be without them?

Toiling for hours, sometimes for little pay, people expect to see these persevering men and women do odd jobs for the holiday season, including Christmas Day, while the rest of us are with family and friends.

PJ Santos, 20, stands on the rooftop of the Dalisay family in Policarpio Street, Mandaluyong City, each night dressed up as Santa Claus to dance the choreographed steps he had practiced for months.

When he saw his first dancing Santa three years ago, he immediately asked around how he could have the job.

"As a kid, I believed in Santa Claus. Now that I'm a grown-up, I want to bring the magic back by being one," said PJ.

Being Santa Claus in this town, he found out, was not an easy job. Fully costumed, he climbs the roof of the Dalisay house, one of the more brightly-lit houses on the street that had earned a reputation for having some of the most attractive outdoor Christmas decor in the metropolis, to entertain passersby through dance.

"But it's all worth it. It's gratifying to see the smiles of the people who literally look up to me," PJ jests. "I love it."

His robotic hand gestures delight the tots in the audience who clap loudly in appreciation. When he scratches his belly, he brings the house down.

Many in the audience, in fact, think PJ is a mechanical or robot Santa, and do a double take when they see him descend from the roof during his break to down a bottle of pop.

EDNA Santos does her bit for charity, asking passersby to help fill up her Salvation Army pail. RUDY ESPERAS

There are other Yuletide characters who may not be as popular as Santa, but have become part of a Pinoy Christmas. These are the showmen who perform in the fun houses.

Marianito Pontawe was a stuntman for several years before his life took a turn for the worse. Without any regular job, he now cuts hair for bus drivers in Cubao.

But for the past five years during the holidays, Marianito morphs into a hunchback when he takes on his seasonal job at the Boom na Boom carnival grounds at the CCP Complex on Roxas Boulevard.

SANTAS take a break after performing sans their sleigh and reindeer on the rooftop of a house along Policarpio Street in Mandaluyong City. JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

"I look forward to this job because it means security for me and my family for the holidays," said Marianito, who had been tasked to lure visitors to enter the horror house.

His makeover looks like expensive prosthetics work, but one is surprised to find out that he concocted the makeup formula himself. "Years working for the film industry taught me how to be resourceful," he said.

Wearing costumes and makeup helps create a new identity and personality, but Edna Santos needs none of that.

Working for the Salvation Army, all she needs is a clean, crisp white uniform and comfortable pants to do her job. She stands for three hours at the entrance and exit of a Pasig City mall with a red pail, asking for donations.

"I do not get bored because we only do this for Christmas. It is for the Lord and for the people we are able to help," said Edna.

The 23-year-old is a full-time mother of three children. During the holidays, she has to wake up earlier than usual to get a choice spot at the mall. Her job's only requisites? Patience and perseverance in asking people for contributions.

"It is tiring because the more coins people drop, the heavier this pail gets," she said, smiling. "But I know that I am doing this for a cause. That is enough to make my aches go away."

The money the Salvation Army collects from kettles around town goes to charitable institutions.

Make every day Christmas Day

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

THIS is the time of the year when everybody is a little more generous because gift-giving is part of the Christmas ritual.

But do you know that when you give and the gesture comes from your heart and not because you were forced to, the Universe will reward you tenfold? If you don't like the word Universe, then call it God.

When I was a kid and even when I was already a grown-up, I thought the saying "it's better to give than to receive" a bit silly. Something was added to the receiver while the same something was subtracted from the giver.

And then I attended a seminar on prosperity where participants were taught how to overcome poverty. From then on, my life had changed for the better.

I didn't seek out that seminar. I was forced by a special friend to attend it. I couldn't say no to that special friend, so I attended with a bit of grumbling. Most of the time, I dozed off.

Although I was not paying much attention, I learned one principle that I thought was worth a try: that one is blessed by tithing.

Tithing is giving 10 percent of what you earn to your church or charity. They say it's in the Bible, but I don't read the Bible, and I'm not religious.

Anyway, I set aside 10 percent of my salary for cancer patients at the Philippine General Hospital. My wife said I must be crazy because we couldn't even make both ends meet, and there I was giving a big chunk of my earnings to strangers. I decided on cancer patients because my dad had died of cancer.

And, surprise of surprises, the more I gave, the more I earned! So the more money I gave to charity. You see, I counted the money I earned so I could set aside 10 percent for charity.

How did the money come? I was offered to host a radio show, "Isumbong Mo kay Tulfo." The show exists to this day. For that show in 1991, I was given a talent fee 10 times what I was earning as a columnist.

And then "Action 9" came. I hosted the controversial TV program on Channel 9 with Dong Puno and Rey Langit. The talent fee was even bigger than the one on radio.

I won't mention the amount I give to charity—which has now widened to include old folks at a home for the aged and victims of calamities—because that would be bragging. But I'd say it's much, much more than when I started tithing in 1985.

How did the good fortune come about? I attribute it to tithing which is practiced by some religions. Members who tithe don't lack material things. The more they give, the more they receive.

Tithing is also practiced by some tribes in many parts of the world. These tribes burn the best part of their harvests for their gods because they expect a better harvest in the coming season. And they indeed get a better harvest.

Sometimes you ask why the generous rich become richer and the poor, poorer. Now, I know the answer. The generous rich become richer because they share part of their earnings with their fellowmen. The poor have nothing to share, so naturally they don't give. The Universe is generous to people who are generous to their fellowmen.

They say that what you sow is what you reap. If you're selfish, the Universe will be stingy. If you're generous, the Universe will be generous. So, make every day Christmas Day.

No Yule cheer in these homes

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

MANY of the families faced with the prospect of dislocation because of the ongoing Northrail Project have decided not to adorn their houses with Christmas decorations this year.

Because the government has yet to announce their final date of relocation, the affected families will have to celebrate the holidays with uncertainty and doubt.

"This is a sad Christmas for us," Samahan ng mga Naninirahan sa Riles (Malabon City) vice president Luz Loro said yesterday.

She used to maintain a tailoring shop, with job orders usually peaking during the holidays. This year, she had stopped accepting orders, thinking she might not finish them on time if the government suddenly orders them to vacate their houses.

Most of the affected families had also long packed their things, anticipating that the government would order them to leave anytime.

The families' only wish this Christmas?

Federation of Railways Informal Settlers in Malabon president Clarita Eneria said they hoped the government would allow them to stay until March 31 next year.

"We want our children to finish the school year first. Otherwise we will have a hard time processing their school records," Eneria said.

The National Housing Authority had said many times in the past that the relocation would push through. The last deadline set was Dec. 3.

Profits bring bounty to prisoners

By Nancy C. Carvajal

A FÊTE well-earned.

Profits brought in by the prison exchange store paid for the 15 roasted pigs (*lechon*) and more than 700 smoked hams that inmates of the New Bilibid Prisons (NBP) in Muntinlupa City feasted on at their Noche Buena last night.

Bureau of Corrections Director Vicente Vinarao told the INQUIRER that the proceeds from the store inside the NBP managed by the prisoners yielded a profit enabling the 18,000 prisoners inside the maximum, medium and minimum security cells to receive P50,000 in cash for their efforts.

The store is where prisoners and their families are allowed to buy canned goods, soap and other essentials at prices lower than those offered in facilities outside the NBP.

Vinarao also said the lechon and the hams were handed over to 15 prison leaders for distribution to fellow inmates in their respective cells.

"My special request to all the inmates is to avoid trouble so they can celebrate the season in peace with their families," Vinarao said.

Families are allowed visits, especially during the holidays, he said, adding that a priest was also allowed to hold Mass for Death Row detainees.

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Compiled by L. Mangulat

AMERICAN FOOTBALL: Hawaii Bowl 2004; 8 a.m.; ESPN—Hawaii takes on UAB in this college bowl game.

TENNIS: US Open 2004 Rewind; 12:30 p.m.; STAR Sports—Relive the quarterfinal match between Jennifer Capriati and Serena Williams.

BASEBALL: 2004 MLB All-Star Game; 10 p.m. (r); ESPN—Rewind and take another look at the mid-season classic in Houston.

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

Great chance awaits Pacquiao in Cebu

By Salven L. Lagumbay, *Contributor*

MANNY Pacquiao could avail of championship caliber sparring not too far from his native GenSan, but he must agree to momentarily break away from his holiday spree.

Pacquiao could fly anytime to Cebu where World Boxing Council featherweight king Injin Chi of South Korea is currently training at the famous ALA Gym in Talamban.

"Yes, he is here," confirmed Cebu sportsman Tony Aldeguer, owner of the ALA Gym when asked by this writer if indeed Chi is training at his sweat shop.

"The manager (Ku Sung Lee) personally asked me through Atty. Rudy Salud during the Yanig sa Taguig fight," Aldeguer explained on why Chi secretly flew to Cebu.

Chi has reportedly decided to transfer base in Cebu owing to Korea's chilly winter season, which makes training there impossible. He is preparing for his second WBC title defense against Australian Tommy Browne on January 30.

Chi would not say it but he should be more than gratified if he could augment his preparation with a few rounds of sparring against Pacquiao, considered by some sectors as the finest featherweight fighter in the world today.

IN-JIN Chi: Perfect Pacquiao sparring mate.

Working out together should also boost the chances of both Pacquiao and Chi in their forthcoming fights.

But it's doubtful if Pacquiao, caught in the swirl of the holidays, would have the appetite for some man-size banging inside the ring.

In fact, the Ring Magazine featherweight champion has insisted he would leave to train in earnest at the Wild Card Boxing Club in California on Jan. 5, not immediately after Christmas as had been advised by trainer Freddie Roach.

Pacquiao on Friday signed a contract for a rematch against WBA/IBF featherweight champion Juan Manuel Marquez for $900,000 on Feb. 26.

Chi is one of the elite fighters being considered to face Pacquiao, along with Marquez, Marco Antonio Barrera, and Erik Morales. His stand-up, forward style should make him a perfect foe for Pacquiao.

Chi won the WBC title with a seventh-round knockout over Michael Brodie in April this year.

Their first encounter had resulted in a draw.

Last July, Chi defended against Japanese Eiichi Sugama and won via a tenth-round technical knockout.

The ALA Gym is known as the former home of prizefight boxing luminaries like ex-WBC champs Gerry Peñalosa and Malcolm Tunacao, ex-WBA champ Joma Gamboa, world-title challenger Edito "Ala" Villamor, Andy Tabanas among others. It is also where current world-ranked fighters as Randy Suico, Rev Santillan, Rey Bautista, and Yukka Gejon train.

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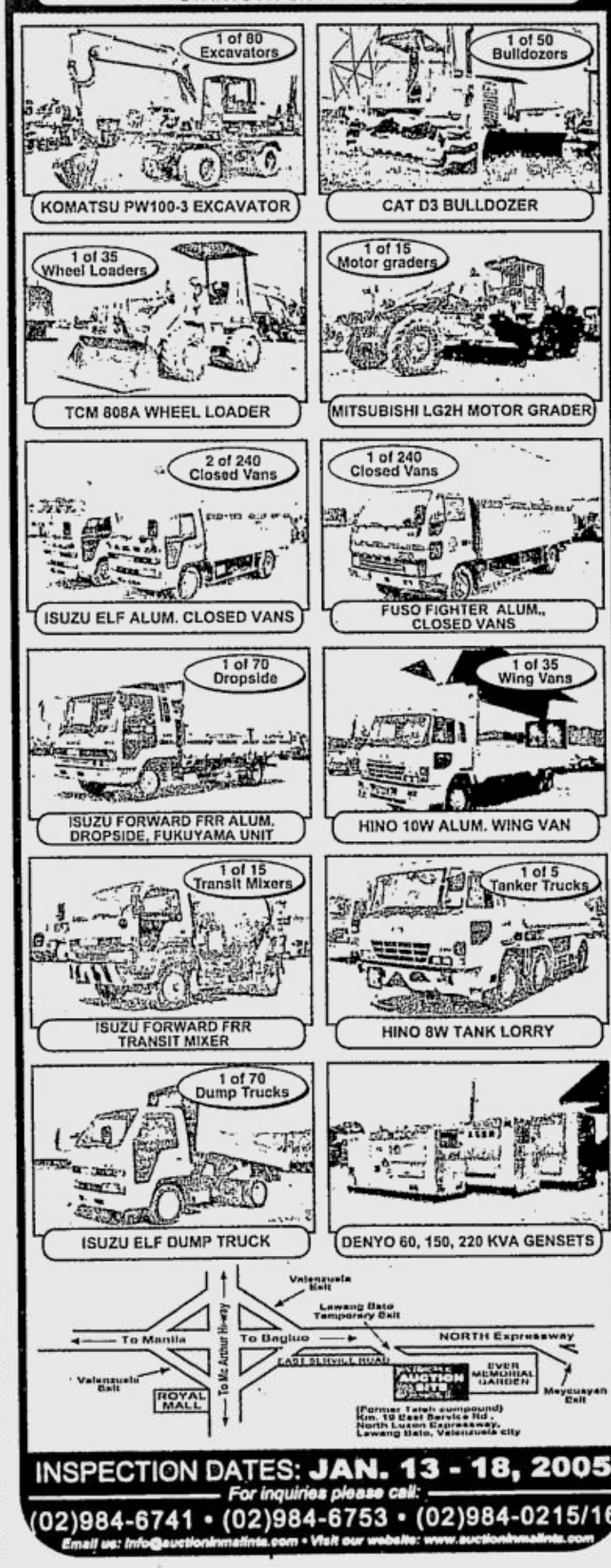

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WHAT'S INSIDE

■ PSC coach scores lack of volleyball program /A19

■ Trying hard the 2nd time around /A18

Free PBA Xmas game admission today

MEMORIES of Christmas past: The last time the league held a Christmas Day game, Rudy Hatfield (left), seen here going for a dunk against Don Carlos Allado of Alaska, led the Coca-Cola Tigers to the All-Filipino crown. A trailing Ali Peek, then a member of the Aces, has since been traded to the Tigers.

CHRISTMAS day wasn't quite merry for Rodney Santos and Migs Noble when they fought for Alaska and lost to Coca-Cola in an all-Filipino championship series exactly two years ago.

Santos and Noble hope it wouldn't be as cheerless today when they play for the Barangay Ginebra Kings against the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals at 4:30 p.m. in the Gran Matador PBA Philippine Cup at the Cuneta Astrodome.

STANDINGS	W	L
Ginebra	12	5
Talk 'N Text	12	5
Shell	12	6
Purefoods	9	9
Alaska	8	9
San Miguel Beer	8	9
Coca-Cola	7	10
Sta. Lucia Realty	6	11
Red Bull	6	11
FedEx	6	12

GAMES TODAY
(Cuneta Astrodome)
2 p.m.—San Miguel Beer vs Red Bull Barako
4:30 p.m.—Talk 'N Text vs Barangay Ginebra

It will be the second time that PBA will play on Christmas day, but this is the first time that a double-header will be played on the same date with San Miguel Beer and Red Bull opening the curtains at 2 p.m.

"We have reserved the best for the holidays and I'm sure the fans will enjoy this Christmas offering," said PBA Commissioner Noli Eala, who opened the general admission section to the public as a a holiday treat.

The winners could have a sumptuous feast afterward as they will end their elimination-round schedule on a winning note with a chance to grab the important seat of their choice.

For the Gin Kings and the Phone Pals, a victory will mean securing the top seed and the outright entry into the best-of-five semifinals while leaving their fallen opponents in a sudden-death clash with Shell for the No. 2 spot.

Though the stakes are lower in the San Miguel Beer-Red Bull collision, a setback will certainly spell doom, especially for the Barako.

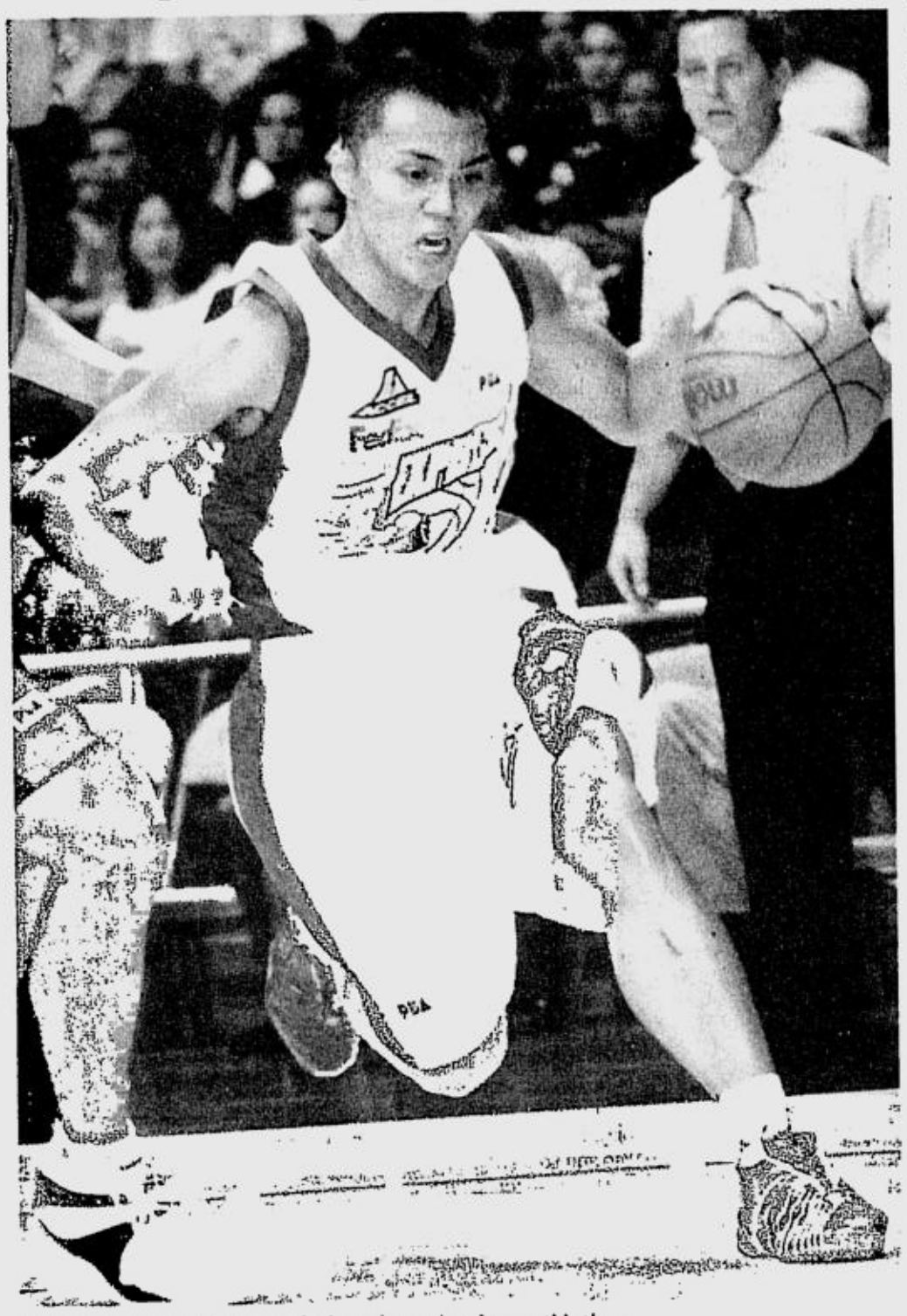
Allowing the Beermen to replicate their 93-82 victory over the Barako would send the Photokina Marketing franchise plummeting to 10th place where they would have to beat the third-ranked team twice in the wildcard phase to advance to the quarterfinals.

Should the Barako come out victorious, the FedEx Express will have to yield against the Coca-Cola Tigers and the Sta. Lucia Realtors

FREE/ A18

RENREN RITUALO

Trying hard the 2nd time around



RENREN Ritualo hopes to make it to the national team this time.

By June Navarro

RENREN Ritualo refused to feel bitter when he failed to make it to the national team spruced up by Philippine Basketball Association stars two years ago.

He took that rejection as an outstanding challenge.

In fact, the 6-foot-1 FedEx Express sniper has been pushing himself to the limit with the hope of making it as a candidate for national squad expected to be formed early next year.

"It was a good experience and I have no regrets when I got cut from the lineup," said the 25-year-old Ritualo. "There are many chances of playing for the national team and I remain optimistic."

Fresh from the amateur ranks in 2002, Ritualo's name was stricken out of the final lineup bound for the Busan Asian Games. The team eventually landed fourth following a heart-breaker against South Korea in the semifinals and a subsequent loss to Kazakhstan.

The 2002 Rookie of the Year then began to make a name for himself, consistently winning awards from the PBA and the PBA Press Corps the past two seasons for his fine marksmanship.

Acknowledged as the best pure shooter in the PBA today, Ritualo could be a vital cog to the success of the national squad in international competitions.

The PBA has embarked on a four-year rehabilitation program of the men's basketball national team following an agreement forged recently with the Basketball Association of the Philippines.

The RP team's primary targets are the ABC championships next year and in 2007, which will serve as qualifying tournaments for the 2006 world championships in Saitama, Japan, and 2008 Beijing Olympics, respectively.

This early, Ritualo has been jacking up his numbers, leading the Express in scoring with 20 points per game, which is currently third overall in the conference.

"I still have many things to learn and I will not stop from improving my craft," said Ritualo, who scored 32 points mostly from the trifecta territory during the Express' recent loss against the Purefoods TJ Hotdogs.

Regardless of who will coach the national team, Ritualo sees no problem as far as work ethics and discipline are concerned. He has never been under the tutelage of any of the four national team coaching aspirants.

Coca-Cola's Chot Reyes, Joel Banal of Talk 'N Text, Red Bull's Yeng Guiao and Tim Cone of Alaska are the top candidates for the RP team coaching portfolio.

PBA Commissioner Noli Eala has already picked his choice but declined to announce it pending the special meeting of the PBA Board of Governors on Dec. 29.

"I always follow what coaches tell me. It will hardly matter whoever the PBA designates as coach if I get picked for the team," said Ritualo, who played for the RP Youth team back in 1996, his only legitimate stint as a national so far.

Ardina dominates Nike jungolf

FORMER world jungolf champion Dottie Ardina hopped into a new division and still dominated the opposition with a rousing victory while Bambee dela Paz scored a big upset in the Nike-sponsored Christmas tournament of the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines at the Canlubang north course recently in Laguna.

Ardina scored an 80 and finished 11 strokes ahead of Andrea Legaspi in girls Class C (11-12 years) to keep her unbeaten run in the local scene.

Dela Paz joined Ardina in the list of girls division winners with a 79, beating Matet Salivio by five in Class A (15-17 years) while Crystal Superal led another family sweep by topping Class B (13-14 years).

Crystal's younger brother Wolen turned in the day's best round of one-under 71 to win boys Class C by 18 strokes while their youngest sister topped girls Class E (7-8 years) which was played at the Riviera executive course by seven.

Andie Unson prevailed in girls Class D (9-10 years) and Janella Buen was the winner in girls Class F (6 and under).

Matthew Manotoc edged IG Gutierrez by two shots with a 73 in Class A.

The results:

Class A: Boys 73 Matthew Manotoc, 75 IG Gutierrez, 76 Mico Yee; Girls 79 Bambee dela Paz, 84 Matet Salivio, 95 Mabel Salivio

Class B: Boys 76 Jikjik Abdon, 79 Migo Ochoa, 85 RJ Ramos; Girls 77 Crystal Superal, 84 Cyna Marie Rodriguez, 96 Beverly Mendoza

Class C: Boys 71 Wolen Superal, 89 Jobim Carlos, 94 Sam Salcedo; Girls 80 Dottie Ardina, 91 Andrea Legaspi, 91 Nicole Martinez

Class D: Boys 77 Bino dela Paz, 78 JR Gonzales, 93 Julius Quiban; Girls 89 Andie Unson, 109 Marvi Monsalve

Class E: Boys 59 AR Ramos, 64 Jason Buen, 75 Aaron Dujale; Girls 66 Princess Superal, 73 Felicia Medalla, 73 Kim Mingi

Class F: Boys 77 Kouji Kano, 82 Ivan Monsalve, 89 Ryan Monsalve; Girls 69 Janella Buen, 135 Elsa Agustin

Free admission in PBA . . .

From page A17

against the Alaska Aces for Red Bull to grab, at best, seat No. 8.

A setback would push the Beermen settling for fifth or sixth while a victory would allow them to dispute the fourth slot in a one-game playoff with either the Aces or the Purefoods TJ Hotdogs.

In case of a triple tie, The Beermen will face the Aces in the playoff since the TJ Hotdogs possess an inferior quotient.

Today's games, originally scheduled early in the month, were canceled at the last minute due to inclement weather. Today's holiday double-header is the culmination of a series of festivities organized by the league for the Yuletide season.

It started barely three weeks ago when teams engaged in gift-giving ceremonies and outreach programs for children in a span of 12 days followed by a special tribute to Alvin Patrimonio of Purefoods last Dec. 22. *June Navarro*

SPORTSWATCH

P1M staked in Rotary golf

BIG prizes, topped by P1 million and a car or its cash equivalent of P700,000, are at stake in the RGFFP (Rotary Golfing Fellowship Foundation of the Philippines) annual tournament slated Jan. 19-22 at the Camp John Hay Golf & Country Club and Baguio Country Club courses. Rotarians can win the P1 million hole-in-one assigned in four par 3s of both courses (two holes per course) and the car or its P700,000 cash equivalent in another four par 3s. Participants have to pay a tournament fee package of P4,950 on or before Jan. 10, 2005. The package includes green fee for both courses, free practice round in each course, four cocktail/dinner events, giveaways, raffle items and prizes. Major sponsors of the annual golfest are Camp John Hay GCC, Baguio Country Club, Petron Corp., Integrated Pipe Specialists, Asia Brewery, Asian Therpeutics (Osim), GNC and Enriquez Security Service Inc. For more details, call RGFFP Secretariat: Pauline Sevilla (09209199000) or Leah Grubat (09209087635) at 7212667 loc. 154 or thru e-mail rgffp1987@yahoo.com or fax no. 7215940.

Alexander named Aussie Fed Cup skipper

SYDNEY, Australia—Former Davis Cup player John Alexander was selected Friday as Australia's Fed Cup team for 2005, taking over from Evonne Goolagong Cawley who retired in November after three years. Alexander, the first man since Neale Fraser in 1978 to head the women's team, will be looking to guide the Australian team back into main world group. The team was knocked out of the world group in July after losing a playoff to Thailand. His first matches in charge will be the Asia/Oceania Zone Group I round-robin competition in April. The youngest player to compete in Davis Cup for Australia, Alexander represented Australia in 41 matches from 1968 to 1980 and reached a career high ranking of No. 8 in singles. He has been a television commentator in recent years. *AP*

Buncio aids RP's fourth place finish

SHAH Alam, Malaysia—Maico Buncio of Team Yamaha Racing-Philippines made the country proud with his remarkable showing in the second Yamaha Asean Cup held in Shah Alam, Malaysia, recently.

Hardly bothered by the presence of his more-experienced Southeast Asian rivals, Buncio led the Philippines to a respectable fourth-place finish in the prestigious competition organized by Yamaha Motor Corp. as part of its efforts to promote motorcycle road racing in the region.

The 16-year-old high school student at OB Montessori (Sta. Ana), Buncio held his own during the two-part race to finish 16th overall out of 25 novice participants who used identically prepared Crypton Z Yamaha underbone motorcycles with minimum modifications for racing use and safety.

The Yamaha Asean Cup is a road race highlighting the strengths of the 4-stroke underbone motorcycle. Far different from the 2-stroke scooter, the fuel-efficient underbone is now widely used not only for competitions but as regular transportation as well.

More importantly, Buncio was the highest finisher among the field of first-timers to join this international competition.

The event was dominated by veteran riders from Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia. It was the first time for the Philippines and Singapore to join the event and next years cup will be held in Thailand.

GREAT MOMENTS ON FILM: One of the year's best images came in Augusta National, when Phil Mickelson won the US Masters, scraping the tag as the most talented golfer to never win a Major off his back.

Dungca tops Eliong tilt

OMAR Dungca emerged the overall individual champion while powering Lubao 2 to the team championship in the third "Ka Eliong" memorial and inter-town golf tournament at the Royal Northwoods Golf Club in San Rafael, Bulacan, recently.

With Dungca at the helm, Lubao 2 scored 225 points to capture the overall team title in the two-day event held to commemorate the memory of the late Cornelio Pancho, better known as "Ka Eliong" for the Bulakeños and the prime mover of the Royal Northwoods Golf Club.

Other members of Lubao 2 were Raymond Sangil, C. Delos Santos and Ferdie Auzo.

Meycauayan 2 pooled 208 points to beat Isabela I and rule the Class A division of the tournament which drew 160 participants from different municipalities around the country.

Isabela I scored 188 points.

Sen. Lito Lapid, Gov. Mark Lapid, Gov. Tomas Joson III and members of the 2004 Federation Golf League champion team Royal Northwoods graced the two-day event also staged to raise funds for the Ka Eliong Foundation.

A Christmas story

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

A KID I know wanted a basketball this Christmas. So he went to his father and said, "Father, the only gift I want this Christmas is a basketball."

Not known to disappoint people, father said, "Son, you will have your basketball this Christmas."

He really didn't have the money to buy a basketball. He was a mere employee at the town hall, working in the office of the mayor as a messenger. He was a no-work-no-pay, no-name guy. His daily wage was not even close to a hundred and twenty bucks. He has a son and two daughters, who all went to school.

The father went to his wife to confide his problem.

"That's really a problem," said his wife.

They lived in a small barrio, whose two stores neither sold basketballs. Basketballs could only be bought in the city, which was a good two hours away.

But even if father had the time to go to the city, unfortunately, he didn't have the money for the basketball. His bus fare alone in going to the city and back would gobble up his pay for the day.

He owned a rundown bicycle that he used in going to work—a gift from a kind-hearted neighbor, whose seaman-son was known to bring home bikes he would retrieve from the garbage bins in Tokyo.

He could bike to the city, labor through four, five, hours on the road. But where would he get the money to buy the basketball?

"I will borrow money from our barangay captain," said father.

"Oh, no, you can't do that," said his wife. "We still owe him a ganta of rice."

"OK, I will sell my bike," said father.

"But that's the only thing you got," said his wife. "If you do that, will you not be bothered by our neighbor's reaction, the one who gave you that bike? Besides, with the bike gone, how will you report for work?"

"I will walk," said father. "I promised our son the basketball. A promise is a promise."

It was at this juncture that their two daughters arrived.

"What seems to be the trouble? Can we be of help?"

"Your brother, I promised him a basketball this Christmas," father said to the girls. "I do not have the money for it."

The eldest said, "You do not have the money now, but will you be able to produce it in time for Christmas?"

"I am afraid no," said father.

The second daughter said, "OK, let's pause for a while. Maybe, after a little silence, we could come up with the solution."

To cut the story short, the kid, not yet 8 years old, got his basketball on Christmas Day.

How?

A week before Christmas, the second daughter went to the mayor's wife and accepted the job being offered her: To baby-sit for the child of the mayor till the eve of Christmas. The mayor's wife was the Grade 3 teacher of the girl. In return for her services, she would receive a basketball.

At first, father was reluctant about the idea.

"I can't allow this to happen," he said. "This is my problem. I will solve this myself."

But he was outvoted, 3-1.

Ever the good sport, father accepted his fate. And to show his sincerity, he biked his daughter to the mayor's wife every morning during the five days that she had to baby-sit. Mother and her eldest stayed home—with the son not knowing anything about what was happening.

As a bonus to the baby-sitter, the mayor's wife gifted her with a sack of rice and a huge ham, in addition to the basketball.

When it was time to give the basketball to the boy, father said to his son, "Jesus, my dear child, as your gift to us, please give this bag of rice to our barangay captain?"

Jesus immediately obliged. Dribbling the basketball with his right hand, his left hand clutching the four gantas of rice stuffed in a bag, off Jesus went.

The moral of the story?

Christmas is not only about giving and receiving, it is also about teamwork.

Merry Christmas!

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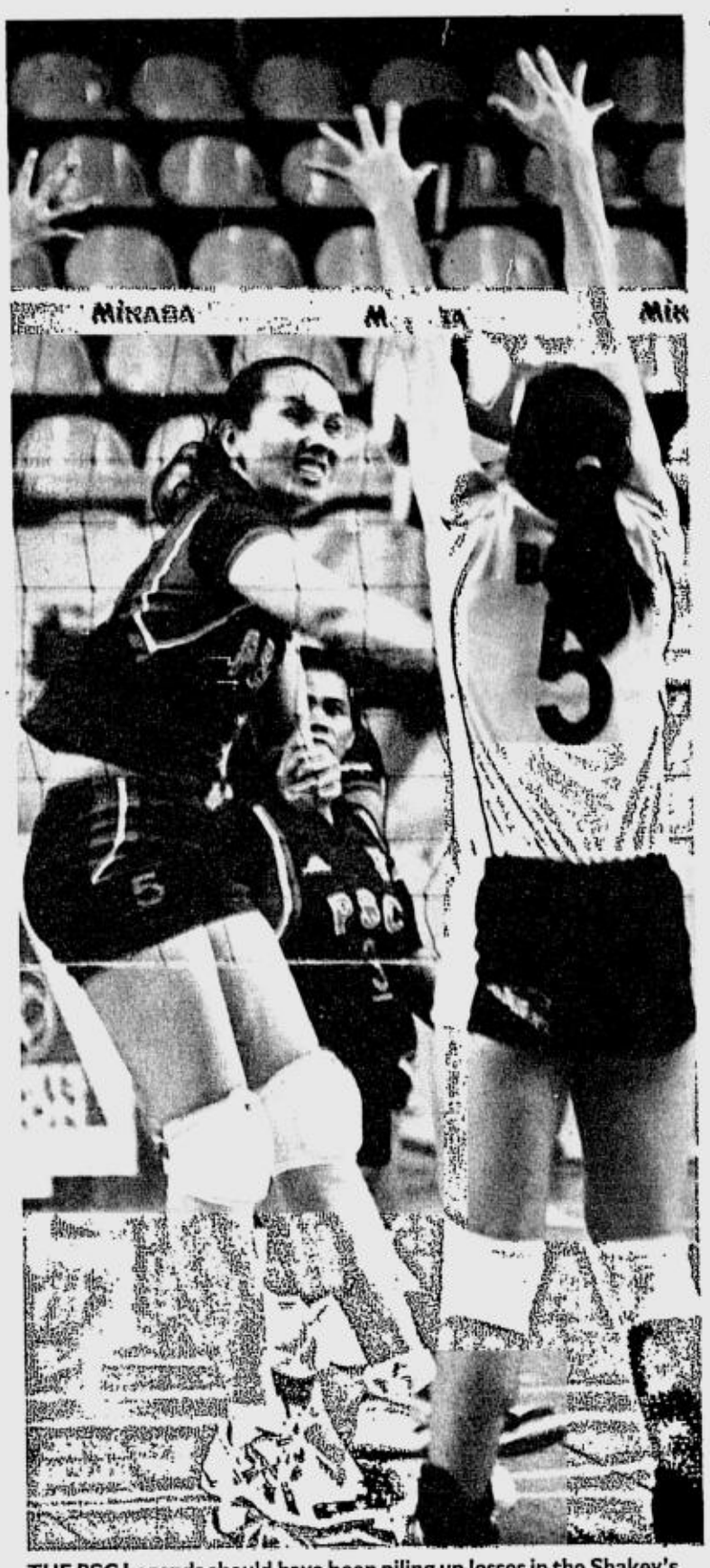


THE PSC Legends should have been piling up losses in the Shakey's V-League right now. Instead, the team's head coach believes, supposed has-beens like Rosamarie Parochina (left) have been smashing their way past a "quality-deprived" field.

PSC coach scores lack of volleyball program

By Musong R. Castillo

TATS Suzara's PSC Legends are winning games at an impressive rate in the Shakey's V-League volleyball tournament.

The problem is, they shouldn't be.

Despite being impressed at the league and by the vision its organizers are trying to fulfill, Suzara admitted he is disappointed at the class of the rest of the field.

Or the obvious lack of it.

"We have no dominating talent out there," Suzara said. "Can we see anyone there who can take over a game? The program (of the Philippine Amateur Volleyball Association) is obviously non-existent."

The Legends, a motley crew of mothers who were made to come out of retirement for the league's second conference, has won four of its six first round games.

They took reigning UAAP titlist La Salle and defending champion Santo Tomas to five grueling sets in the only two games that they lost.

Against the Tigresses, PSC played its fourth game in two weeks, and against the Lady Archers, the Legends lost attacker Teresa dela Rosa to a foot injury in the third set.

Not that Suzara, a member of the development commission of the International Volleyball Federation (FIVB), is offering excuses. He did not have the intention of winning games, anyway.

What bothers him is the fact that his team was invited to the tournament to lose games, and yet, they seem poised to win the championship against a field made up of players who could be their daughters.

"Look, my players were in their prime more than 10 years ago. Some of them have borne kids and all of them have stopped playing at around that time," Suzara explained.

"And now you tell me that we are beating teams with players half their age, who are involved in solid volleyball programs with their schools?"

Suzara was secretary-general of the Pava in 1993, the last time the country won a gold medal in volleyball in the Singapore Southeast Asian Games.

Suzara pooled his former players together a month before the tournament, made them practice every other day and made it no secret that they will be playing in the tournament "to inspire the younger set of players."

"Now we have a sponsor who wants to finance the team, because they can see the skill is there, something they don't see in the other teams."

The tournament is on a two-week break, with the second round of the eliminations to resume on Jan. 4.

And Suzara sees his Legends to be playing even better, with the break for the holidays to be used to rest their aching limbs that have been slowed by time.

"I hope the people at the Pava do their job, and that is to develop volleyball in the country. They have no program, no tournament."

Foreign bets join RP Ladies

NATIONAL players of Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia are set to plane in to beef up what should be the strongest fields for the Philippine Ladies Open golf championship slated Jan. 12-14 at the Manila Golf Club course inside Forbes Park.

Among the confirmed entries are Nontaya Srisawang and Suteera Chanachai of Thailand who are both carrying handicaps of 2 while Singapore will be represented by Melissa Loh (handicap 3), Sock Hwee Koh (6), Christabel Goh, Suann Heng (6) and Kristle Koh.

The Malaysian Ladies Golf Association recently sent word that it will also field bets to the annual 54-hole tourney organized by the Women's Golf Association of the Philippines.

WGAP president Nancy Ortiga said that neighboring countries are sending their national players over as part of their preparations for the Southeast Asian Games, which the country will host next year.

AGOJO: Leads local charge

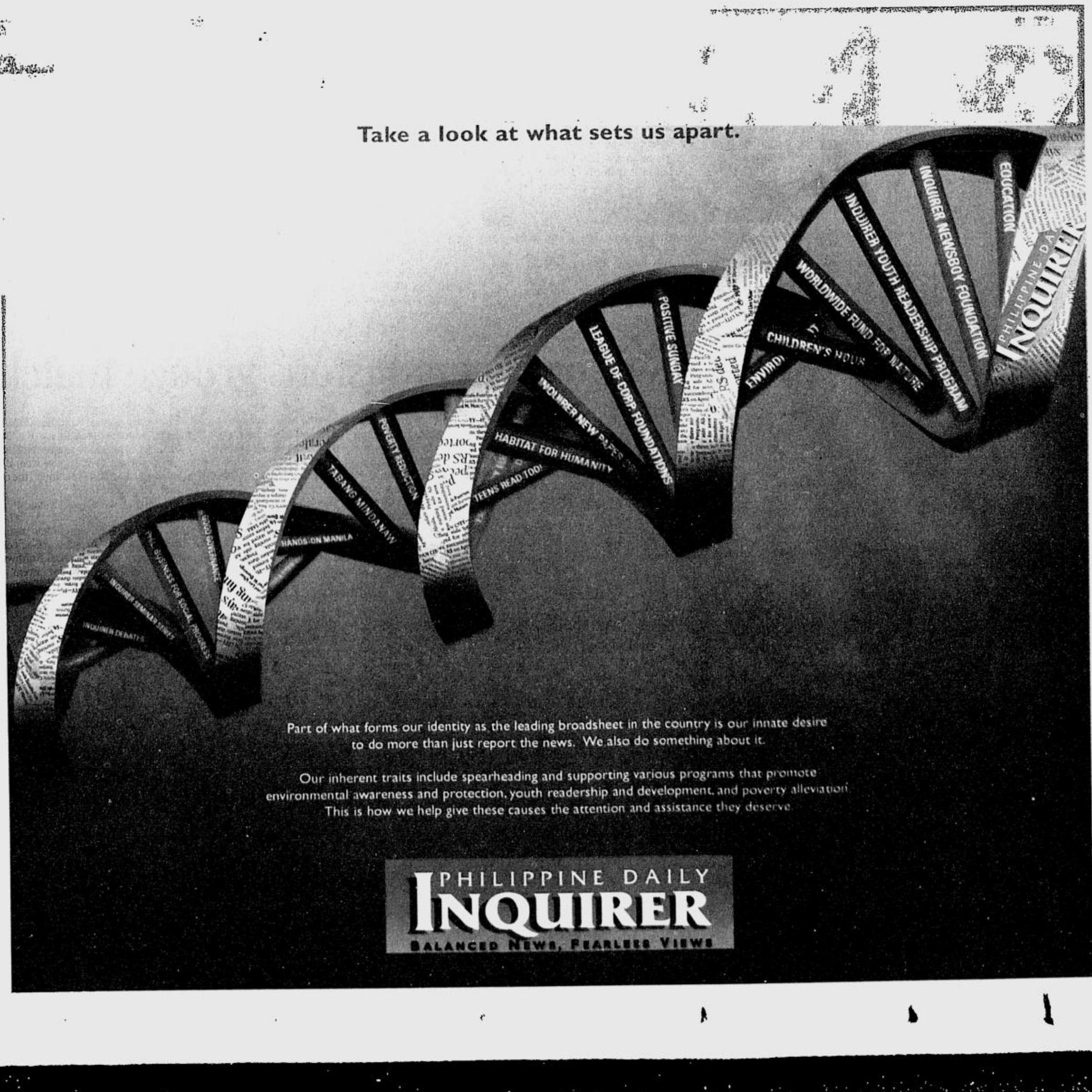
"Though the competitions will be held in another course, I believe they would want to put their players to test against their possible opponents," said Ortiga.

Frances Bondad, the Fil-Australian who won last year, is definitely coming back to defend the title, according to Ortiga.

Jayvie Agojo will be spearheading the local contingent together with former champion Carmelette Villaroman and former national players Anya Tanpinco, Aileen Rose Yao and Lora Roberto.

Deadline for submission of entries is on Dec. 30, 2004. Interested parties may call 0917-5295324 for details or email wgap71@hotmail.com. Entry forms are available at Manila Golf Club and may be faxed to 5319190.

BONDAD: Definitely coming



Nuggets gain rare holiday treat: Christmas at home

DENVER—Life does not get much cushier than it does for NBA players.

For many, no day is complete without an afternoon nap. They take chartered flights with custom seating and first-rate food, and stay in the finest hotels on the road. And when they reach their destination, they get to play a game they have loved since childhood—for a mind-boggling salary.

But even the best job can't make up for time away from home, which is common during the holidays for NBA players. The Denver Nuggets just spent 12 days playing seven games on the East Coast.

Nuggets coach Jeff Bzdelik knows the routine this time of year, having spent three decades in basketball. He spent seven years working for Pat Riley with both New York and Miami.

"A couple of times when I was with Coach Riley we left at 4 o'clock Christmas Eve to play a noon nationally televised game on Christmas Day," he said. "That's tough on everyone."

With a rare three-day break before their home date with Dallas on Sunday, the Nuggets will practice Friday, giving them a brief chance to catch up with family affairs.

Several Nuggets will be welcoming family members from out of town this weekend. Guard Andre Miller will get a week with his 5-year-old son, Duane, visiting from Phoenix. Forward Rodney White will get to see the first Christmas of his 7-month-old daughter, Nalani Joi.

"This will be my best Christmas ever," said White, who is flying in his daughter's family from California.

Perhaps no Nugget has waited longer for this week than Bryon Russell. The guard's wife and three children stayed in California when he came to Colorado this offseason. An 11-year NBA veteran, Russell said he is used to being away from loved ones during the season.

"Of course, I wouldn't spend Christmas without them," he said.

Russell joked about his young son, who is already learning to play his father's game.

"For a 6-year-old, he's all right," he said. "He can shoot on 10-foot-goals lefty. I've got a gold mine in the making."

Several Nuggets said that as hard as traveling this time of year can be on them, others in the family have it harder.

"It puts a lot of pressure on your wife to bear the burden of making the house festive and in the Christmas spirit—getting the presents, chauffeuring the kids, decorating the house," said Bzdelik, adding that he was going to do some last-minute shopping Thursday during the Nuggets' day off.

Kenyon Martin admitted he did not do much of the shopping in his family.

"That's what I've got a wife for," he said. "A wife and the Internet. I take care of hers and she takes care of everyone else."

Martin counts himself lucky to be home both for Christmas and his son's birthday on Jan. 6.

New York Times News Service

Suns, Heat stretch scorching streak

NEW YORK—Amare Stoudemire had 30 points and 11 rebounds as the Suns won their 10th straight game, downing the Memphis Grizzlies, 109-102, in Phoenix on Thursday.

Shawn Marion added 29 points and seven rebounds for Phoenix, whose 23-3 record is the best start in the NBA since the Michael Jordan-led Chicago Bulls went 41-3 to begin the 1995-96 season.

Steve Nash added 17 points and 14 assists for the Suns, while Quentin Richardson had 17 points and 10 rebounds. Phoenix also had a nine-game winning streak earlier this season.

Mike Miller had 22 points and seven rebounds to lead the Grizzlies.

In other games, Manu Ginobili scored 22 points as the Spurs beat the Minnesota Timberwolves, 96-82, in San Antonio.

Tim Duncan had 19 points and 10 rebounds for the Spurs, while Tony Parker added 19 points.

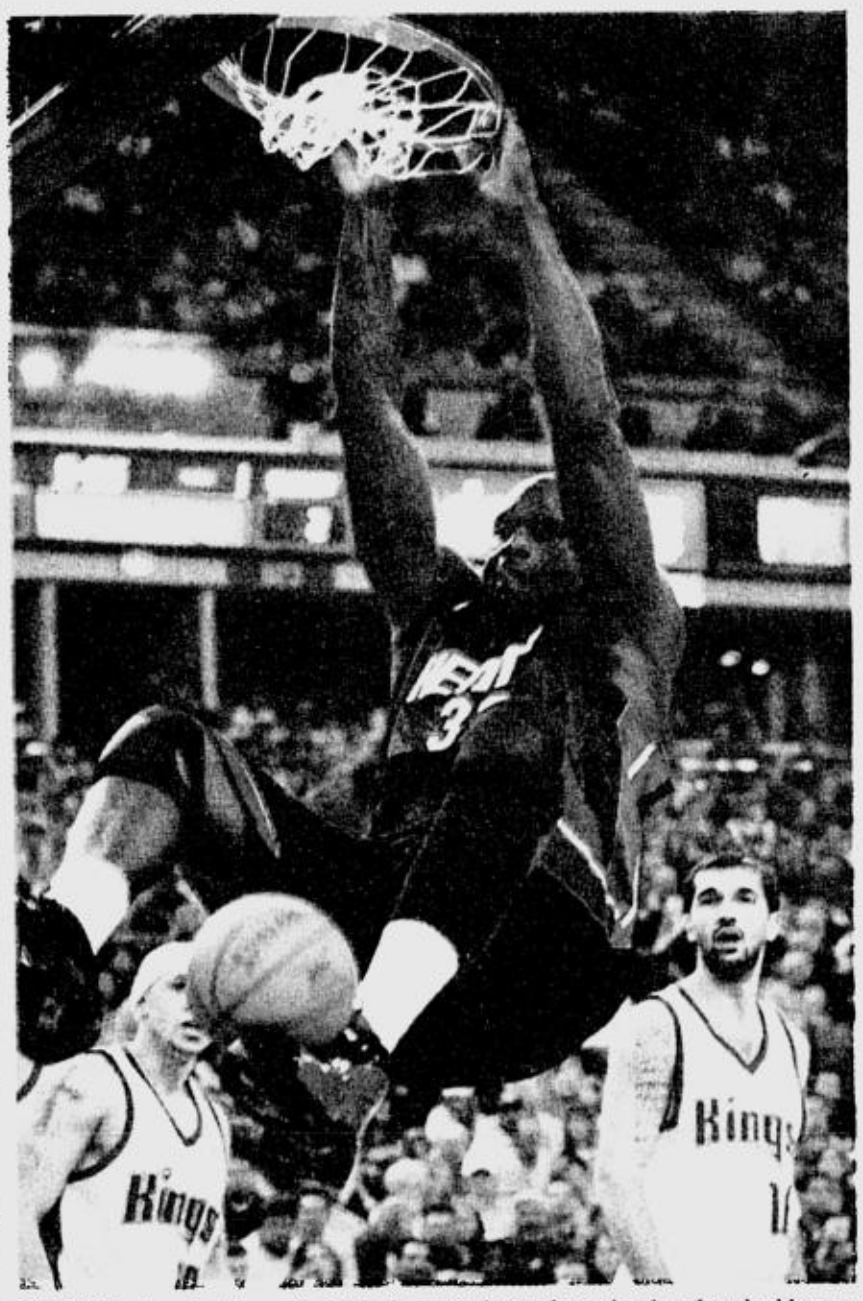
Wally Szczerbiak scored 22 points for the T-Wolves, who have lost four straight road games. Kevin Garnett had 15 points, 10 boards and 9 assists.

In Sacramento, Shaquille O'Neal had 25 points and 10 rebounds as the Miami Heat overcame a 17-point deficit to beat the Kings, 109-107.

Dwyane Wade had 22 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds for the Heat, which will carry a 10-game winning streak into their Christmas Day game against Kobe Bryant and the Los Angeles Lakers.

Chris Webber scored 26 points and Mike Bibby added 21 points and eight rebounds for the Kings, while Peja Stojakovic chipped in with 19 points as Sacramento blew a 12-point lead in the final six minutes.

Meanwhile, a much awaited Christmas reunion between former Los Angeles Lakers teammates Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant finally arrives here Saturday like a gift from Santa.



MIAMI Heat center Shaquille O'Neal, center, hangs from the rim after dunking. AP

Few regular-season games have attracted the hype and attention surrounding the return of O'Neal with the Miami Heat to the Staples Center, where he spent eight seasons with the Lakers and won three NBA crowns alongside Bryant.

"I'm a little banged up but I'm going to be ready to play good clean basketball," O'Neal said. *Reuters*

Opening act over, Kobe, Lakers ready for Shaq, Miami

LOS ANGELES—There was the opening act Wednesday night, the Lakers' 101-89 victory over the New Orleans Hornets.. Then there was the main event, as Kobe Bryant stood before his locker and the full focus of the basketball world shifted to him and his team.

They finished the 25th game of their season successfully at Staples Center—though they might have lost Caron Butler in the process—then turned their attention to the one unlike any other in franchise history.

It will be a nationally televised Christmas Day reunion between Bryant and Shaquille O'Neal, teammates through eight seasons, three championships and countless feuds, inescapable in its promotion over the past weeks.

"I can't believe they're actually spending money marketing this game," said Bryant, who had 29 points against New Orleans. "I think this has had eight years of marketing."

Now comes the game the Lakers have been asked about 10 times a day this month, by friends, family and reporters. They have two days to prepare, with O'Neal and the Miami Heat arriving in Los Angeles late tonight.

"It's good to finally have it here and have it upon us," center Chris Mihm said. "For a while it seemed like it was forever away. Then it's been like right around the corner here all December."

First they had to win a game Wednesday that had all the feel of a dress rehearsal, against a Hornets team that dropped to an NBA-worst 2-23.

New Orleans stayed within a basket until the final four minutes, when point guard Chucky Atkins hit the last of his six 3-pointers to put the Lakers in front for good. Atkins finished with a season-high 30 points.

"Any means necessary," Atkins said. "That's what I said. I think that was the motto today because we had to win this game. We had to go into Saturday with some kind of confidence."

But the Lakers (14-11) could not get to the end of the game without incident.

With 3:27 left, Butler got tangled up with Hornets guard Dan Dickau as Bryant headed down court for a breakaway dunk.

Butler and Dickau fell to the ground and Butler struck Dickau once in the midsection. He was ejected, though Butler said afterward he was merely trying to protect his surgically repaired knee from being injured again.

Tomjanovich, meanwhile, said he would try in the next two days to "maybe read some of the hype" he keeps getting told about.

Bryant took care of the rest from there, responding to O'Neal's comment Monday about Bryant being a Corvette and him being a brick wall on that fateful first drive through the lane.

"I'm so far from a Corvette, it's not even funny," Bryant said. "He could have said a Lamborghini or something."

Bryant also was asked about whether he thought former coach Phil Jackson would be joining the millions expected to watch on ABC.

"If he's out on his little canoe," Bryant said, "he'll have his little TV screen."

If O'Neal was watching his former team Wednesday from Sacramento, he might have been baffled by who was starring for the Lakers.

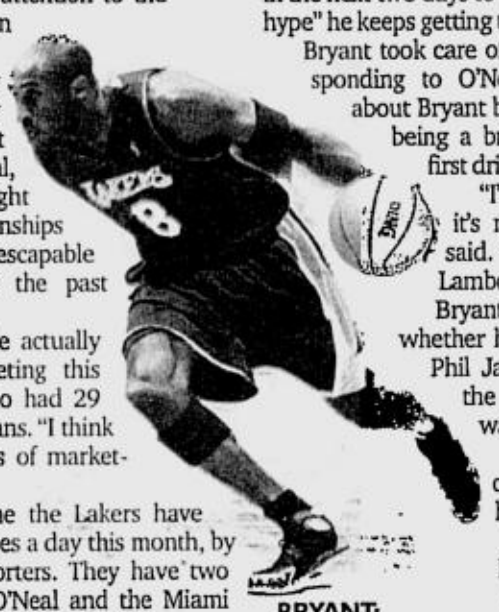
Mihm scored 11 points and grabbed 21 rebounds, matching the NBA high for this season.

Mihm also became the first Laker to total 20 rebounds in a game since O'Neal, the player Mihm will try to stop Saturday.

New Orleans guard Baron Davis scored 17 points and hit five 3-pointers as the Hornets trimmed what had been a 15-point Lakers lead to a three-point deficit (73-70) early in the fourth.

But the Lakers held on and Atkins was asked if his team was ready to step onto the stage that awaits.

"I don't think we're there yet," Atkins said. "But we have to go out and make things happen." *New York Times News Service*



BRYANT: Lamborghini, not a Corvette

Rockets get Barry; Knicks lose Crawford

HOUSTON, Texas—Three-point specialist Jon Barry was obtained by the Houston Rockets here Thursday in a National Basketball Association trade that sent guard Tyronn Lue to the Atlanta Hawks in exchange.

The Rockets have struggled to a 12-14 start, 11th in the Western Conference, and rank only 27th in offense in the 30-team league with 88.9 points a game.

Veteran shooting guard Barry averaged 5.2 points and 1.8 assists in 16 games with the Hawks and will likely come off the bench when star guard Tracy McGrady takes a break.

Meanwhile, New York Knicks guard Jamal Crawford will be sidelined anywhere from three-to-six weeks with a case of turf toe.

Crawford suffered the injury in the third quarter of Wednesday's 114-109 loss to Boston when he was stepped on by the Celtics' Jiri Welsch. X-rays on Crawford's foot proved to be negative, but the fifth-year pro will likely be placed on the injured list prior to Sunday's game against Charlotte.

The 24-year-old is putting together his best season, averaging a career-high 19.3 points along with 2.7 assists through 26 contests.

Crawford was acquired by New York along with guard Jerome Williams in an offseason trade with Chicago for Dikembe Mutombo, Othella Harrington, Frank Williams and Cezary Trybanski. *AFP, Reuters*

O'Neal OK'd for Pacers-Pistons grudge match

NEW YORK—Jermaine O'Neal will be able to play for the Indiana Pacers against the Detroit Pistons on Saturday after a US District Court here Thursday upheld a reduction in the suspension from a brawl.

Federal judge George Daniels upheld a ruling Wednesday by arbitrator Roger Kaplan that cut the suspension on O'Neal imposed by National Basketball Association commissioner David Stern from 25 to 15 games.

Because O'Neal missed his 15th game on Wednesday, he can return on Christmas Day when the Pacers play host to Detroit in their first meeting since the Nov. 19 encounter that ended with a melee between Pacer players and fans.

"Im happy about two things for Christmas—great health and family and the opportunity to play again," O'Neal said. "I'm extremely happy. It has been a tough process. Now I can play the game I love so much."

O'Neal was among five Pacers suspended for their parts in a brawl. Stern banished Ron Artest for the last 72 games of the season and suspended Stephen Jackson for 30 games, Anthony Johnson for five and Reggie Miller for one.

"I'm ready but I have to find a way to bottle up the energy and use it in a good way," O'Neal said. "I have to make sure we win games and when Stephen Jackson gets back, we can win a championship."

Five players and five spectators were charged with assault from the brawl.

The temporary restraining order issued by the federal court will allow O'Neal to play in three Indiana games before another hearing on Dec. 30.

"Our franchise is dedicated to surviving this incident and pursuing our goals," general manager Donnie Walsh said.

"This is the first good news we've had in some time on this issue. Were very happy for Jermaine and were happy to have him back playing. We're hopeful this will become a more permanent decision in the next couple of weeks."

Pacers coach Rick Carlisle said O'Neal will be a starter on Christmas.

"We're fortunate to have a great player and a great person back on the court representing the Indiana Pacers," Carlisle said.

O'Neal would save $1.64 million in lost salary by having his suspension reduced, provided the court does not rule later in favor of the NBA's appeal and make him sit out another 10 games.

"While we disagree with the courts decision and expect that ultimately judge Daniels will find that the arbitrator had no authority in this matter, we will, of course, abide by the ruling of the court," NBA deputy commissioner Russ Granik said in a statement.

The Pacers, who have lost eight of their past 10 games, went 5-10 without O'Neal after a 13-3 start to the season.

Kaplan upheld the suspensions of Jackson and Artest during his arbitration hearing after ruling he had jurisdiction to hear the case. The NBA argued he had no jurisdiction and refused to participate in the hearing.

The NBA's union agreement allows Stern full range to discipline players for on-court actions and Kaplan said Stern had cause to issue the punishments he did, although the reduction for O'Neal could undermine future Stern edicts.

The melee began when a spectator hurled a cup at Artest, who ran into the stands and attacked a fan. Other spectators grabbed Artest until Jackson ran to his aid and chaos soon followed.

O'Neal's suspension came for punching a spectator who ran onto the court during the confusion and for swinging punches at others while exiting. *AFP*

Coach fined for verbal abuse

NEW YORK—Detroit Pistons coach Larry Brown was fined $15,000 here Thursday by the National Basketball Association for verbal abuse of an official following an 89-82 loss Wednesday to Chicago.

NBA vice president of basketball operations Stu Jackson imposed the fine upon Brown, coach of the reigning NBA champions as well as the 2004 Athens Olympic bronze medal US squad, for the incident at Auburn Hills, Michigan.

Brown had to be restrained from going after referee Anthony Jordan, whom Brown said he felt was ignoring him.

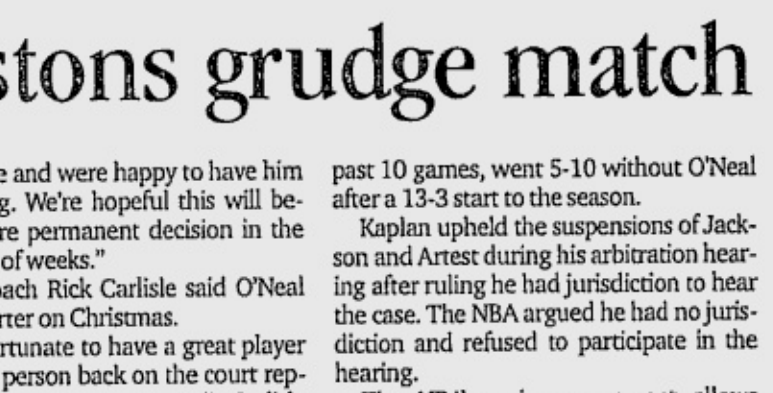
And Brown said he had a sense he was going to hear from the league in some form about his exuberance.

"The guy wouldn't talk to me during the game," Brown said after the match.

"I can't understand that. I wasn't being discourteous. Well, I was at the end and I suppose I'll hear about that."

By beating Detroit, the Bulls won their fifth game in a row, the team's longest streak since 1998, Michael Jordan's final season playing for the Bulls.

Chicago also snapped a nine-game losing skid to the Pistons. *AFP*



CONTRACT SIGNING. Leo Shieh, president of Hitachi Phil. (second from left), shakes hands with Sonny Co of host Chiang Kai Shek for the sponsorhip of 29th Hitachi Metro Manila Tiong Lian Basketball League during the press conference held at the Megastar restaurant in Malate, Manila. Witnessing the event are Chiang Kai Shek athletic director Leoncio Chua (left) and Benedict Chua of Xavier School (right).

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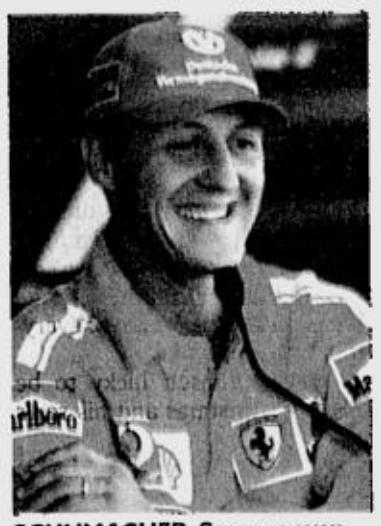
F1 changes will not affect Schumacher, Ferrari


SCHUMACHER: Same as ever

LONDON—Formula One may look very different in the next few seasons.

Bernie Ecclestone's control over a sport he's run for 25 years may be waning, with a rival group hoping to wrest control and run a series beginning in 2008.

Meanwhile, FIA president Max Mosley is pushing to cut costs in one of the world's most expensive sports.

"Why do teams need 100 people working on electronics?" he asked. "It takes 1,000 people to put two cars on the grid."

In 2005, engines will have to last for two races, and cars will be limited to the same set of tires for qualifying and race day. And Mosley will propose more cost cuts next month to team directors.

Will any of this matter to Michael Schumacher and Ferrari?

Don't count on it.

Ever since the German driver won his first of five straight titles in 2000—he has seven overall—F1 officials have been trying to slow him. They've restructured the points system, changed testing rules and banned hi-tech drivers' aids.

So what happened in 2004?

Schumacher was more dominant than ever. He won 13 of 18 races—teammate Rubens Barrichello won two more—in the least competitive season in F1 history.

Schumacher won 12 of the first 13 races and might have been 13-of-13 had he won in Monaco instead of going out while leading in a freak crash with Juan Pablo Montoya of Williams-BMW.

Only three non-Ferrari drivers managed a victory—Montoya in the season-ending Brazilian GP, Jarno Trulli in Monaco and McLaren's Kimi Raikkonen in Belgium.

Schumacher will be 36 when the new season opens on March 6 in Melbourne, Australia. With a record 19 races on the calendar—the Turkish GP on Aug. 21 is the new event—Schumacher has even more chances.

With seven season titles, he is two ahead of the legendary Juan Manuel Fangio. With 83 career wins, he's 32 clear of Alain Prost and has surpassed Aryton Senna by 42. And he shows no sign of quitting.

"I just race for the pleasure of racing, competing and winning," Schumacher said near the end of last season. "I guess Formula One will last quite a bit longer. As long as I'm competitive and enjoy racing, I will do it."

Barrichello (114 points) finished second behind Schumacher (148), with BAR-Honda's Jenson Button third (85).

Ferrari ran away with its sixth straight constructors title with 262 points followed by BAR-Honda (119), Renault (105), Williams-BMW (88), McLaren-Mercedes (69) and Sauber (34).

Ferrari and BAR enter 2005 with the same driver lineup, and Renault has added Giancarlo Fisichella to team with Fernando Alonso.

BMW-Williams and McLaren, the sport's dominant two teams until Ferrari took over, have juggled drivers.

Montoya has moved to McLaren from Williams, where he will team with Raikkonen. Ralf Schumacher departed Williams for Toyota and will drive with Trulli.

Mark Webber has joined Williams, with the second seat still open. *AP*

NFL squads battle for position

WASHINGTON—Entering the penultimate weekend of the National Football League season, seven of 16 playoff spots are decided, six clubs have been eliminated and 17 more are fighting to maintain their Super Bowl dreams.

American football's muddy playoff picture comes into focus with key games including Green Bay's Friday showdown with Minnesota for the NFC North crown and Carolina at Tampa Bay, two of 10 NFC title hopefuls with losing records.

"That's the way it goes," Tampa Bay coach John Gruden said. "I've been on teams where 9-7 isn't nearly good enough. Things go in cycles."

No team with a losing record has reached the NFL playoffs in a non-strike season, but it could happen this year with Arizona, Dallas, Chicago, Detroit, Washington, Tampa Bay and the New York Giants all at 5-9.

"I don't know how realistic it is but I do know we have a chance," said Washington coach Joe Gibbs.

Carolina, St. Louis and New Orleans are all 6-8 and level for the sixth and final NFC spot. But New Orleans has a Sunday date with NFC South winner Atlanta (11-3) and St. Louis plays host to Philadelphia (13-1) on Monday night.

Philadelphia lost star receiver Terrell Owens to a broken leg but the Eagles have been denied one victory shy of the Super Bowl the past three seasons and will be motivated to finally break through.

Carolina, which lost last February's Super Bowl to New England in the final seconds, can take a major step toward returning to the playoffs by winning at Tampa Bay. But many rivals are waiting for a slip.

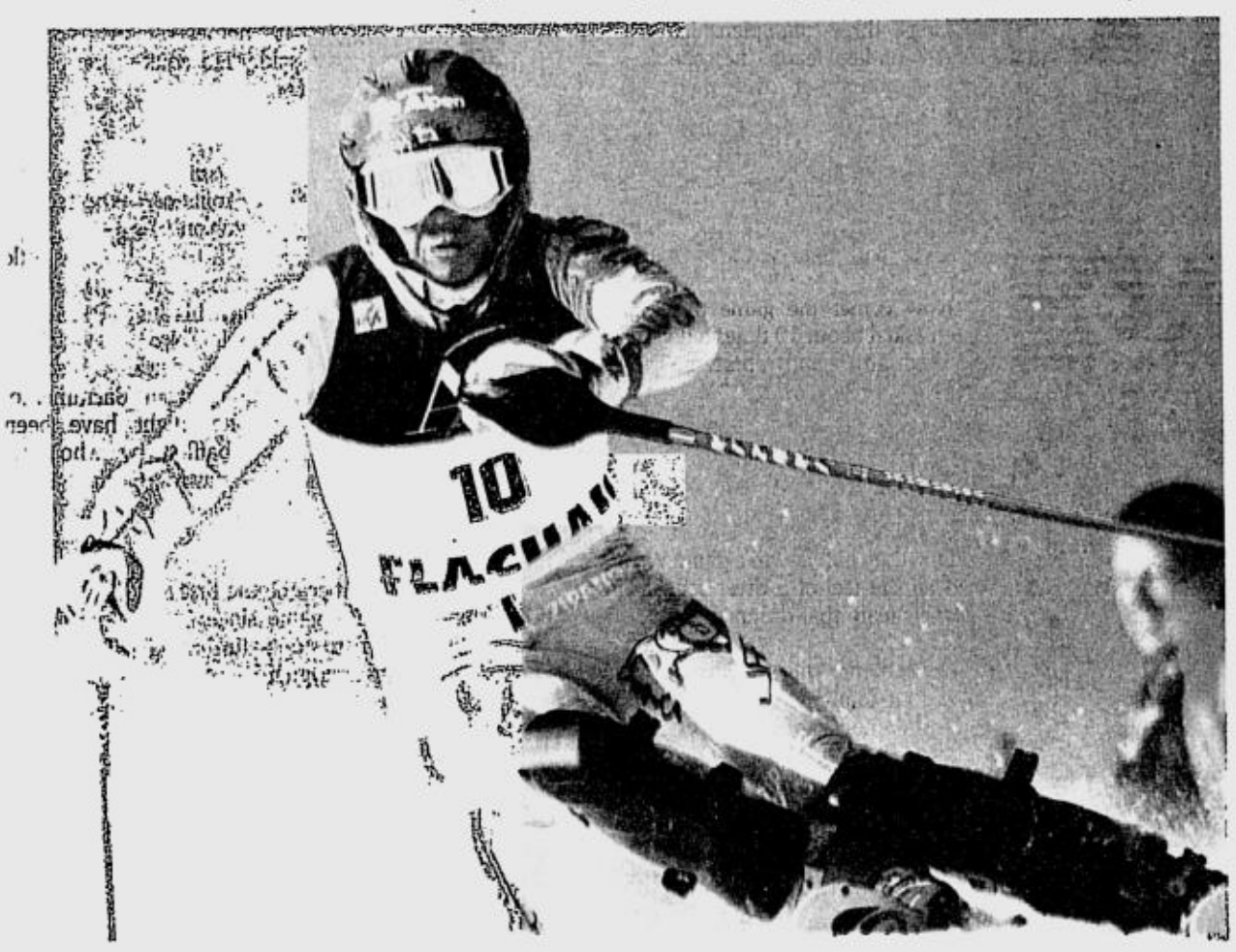
Archrivals Washington and Dallas meet in Texas with the winner likely staying in the title fight into the final weekend. Other 5-9 clubs' games feature Chicago at Detroit, Arizona at Seattle and the Giants at Cincinnati.

The Green Bay Packers visit Minnesota on Christmas Eve. The winner takes a division title and a home-field edge in the first playoff round. A loss would dim hopes for the Vikings, 8-6, while the Packers, 8-6, have clinched a spot.

"For some reason we're still in the playoffs," Packers quarterback Brett Favre said. "I don't know if that says a lot about us or it doesn't say a lot about the other teams."

The AFC playoff picture is much clearer. Pittsburgh (13-1), New England (12-2), Indianapolis (11-3) and San Diego (11-3) have clinched division crowns.

San Diego's visit to Indianapolis on Sunday could be historic as well as a playoff preview, with Colts' quarterback Peyton Manning needing one touchdown pass to match Dan Marino's single-season record of 48 touchdown tosses. *AFP*


SNOW CONTEST: Akira Sasaki of Japan competes in men's slalom FIS Ski World Cup in Flachauon. Giorgio Rocca of Italy won before second Rainer Schoenfelder of Austria and third Alois Vogl of Germany. Sasaki finished tenth. AFP

New demons hound baseball

WASHINGTON—Boston supporters could finally forget the "Curse of the Bambino" as the Red Sox ended an 86-year championship drought, but 2004 closed with Major League Baseball haunted by another curse—steroids.

Revelations of grand jury testimony in early December featured an admission of doping by Jason Giambi and a confession from record-setting home run slugger Barry Bonds that he took supplements from the scandal-linked BALCO labs.

San Francisco Giants star Bonds, who said he did not know the nature of the substances he ingested, hit a single-season record 73 home runs in 2001 and has a career total of 703 homers—53 shy of breaking Hank Aaron's all-time American homer record and just 11 shy of matching Babe Ruth for second on the list.

For a game where centuries of statistics are meticulously kept, Bonds has raised a cloud of suspicion over hallowed records.

"I think we need to do everything we can to put everyone's mind at ease about players using steroids," New York Mets pitcher Tom Glavine said.

"We need to wipe away as much doubt about this as we possibly can. Anything we can do to take away people's suspicions, we need to do that."

The scandal led owners and the players union to agree on a tougher drug policy after a first-ever season of testing for steroids, a program ridiculed as inadequate by World Anti-Doping Agency officials.

"I will leave no stone unturned in accomplishing our goal of zero tolerance by the start of spring training and am confident we will achieve this goal," major league commissioner Bud Selig said.

The doping scandal overshadowed one of the best stories in baseball history as the Red Sox captured their first World Series title since 1918, sweeping the St. Louis Cardinals in four games to capture the best-of-seven showdown.

"I don't think words can describe what this means," Red Sox standout Jason Varitek said. "There are a lot of people who are going to be able to die happy now."

Derek Lowe became the first pitcher in baseball history to win the last game in all three playoff rounds, forever banishing the

BONDS: Steroid scandal

Curse of the Bambino—a jinx dating to the 1919 sale of legend Ruth to the rival New York Yankees.

"We weren't alive back then," Red Sox leadoff hitter Johnny Damon said. "Some of our grandparents weren't even alive. We didn't care about it. We knew we were able to do something about it." The Red Sox needed the greatest comeback in baseball history simply to reach the Series, losing the first three games of the American League final to the Yankees before advancing, the first club in history to escape an 0-3 hole.

"No more going to Yankee Stadium and listening to (chants of) '1918'—finally," Lowe said.

Boston became only the fourth team in 100 finals to win without ever trailing in a game, a fitting finish for a club that suffered several near-miss title efforts, the most agonizing coming in 1986 just one out from a crown.

"There have been so many people in their 90s who said, 'I just want to live long enough to see one championship before I die.' This is for them," Red Sox chair Tom Werner said.

The Montreal Expos, wards of the league's other club owners for two years, were relocated to Washington and renamed the Nationals. *AFP*

Federer, Russians dominate tennis world

LONDON—Roger Federer staged a single-handed takeover of men's tennis in 2004. In the women's game the Russians seized control.

Anastasia Myskina fired the first salvo for Russia at Roland Garros in June, becoming the first Russian woman to win a grand slam title.

Four weeks later Siberian-born teenager Maria Sharapova demolished Serena Williams to win Wimbledon and in September Svetlana Kuznetsova powered to victory at the US Open.

As the year drew to a close, Myskina inspired Russia to their first Fed Cup title against France.

Federer's emergence to fill the vacuum left by the retirement of Pete Sampras stamped an indelible mark on the year.

The Swiss, who has a steely core to compliment an unrivalled arsenal of weapons, captivated fans across the globe as he racked up a 74-6 singles record.

By winning the Australian and US Opens, and retaining his Wimbledon crown in between, he became the first player since Mats Wilander in 1988 to win three grand slam titles in a year.

He was unbeaten against players in the top 10, matched Sampras' 23-match winning streak and set a record of 13 consecutive wins in finals—not bad considering he does not even have a coach.

The year was just weeks old when Federer dethroned Andy Roddick as world number one by marching to the Australian Open title against Marat Safin.

The 24-year-old then won tournaments in Dubai, Hamburg and Halle before breezing into an eagerly-awaited final against Roddick at Wimbledon.

Further wins in the finals of the Toronto Masters and Bangkok gave Federer an 8-1 lead over the American by the year-end as talk of a Sampras/Agassi style rivalry proved premature.

The women's season began in predictable fashion when Justine Henin-Hardenne beat fellow Belgian Kim Clijsters to win the Australian Open and confirm her No. 1 ranking.

However, apart from an Olympic gold medal, the year turned sour for Henin-Hardenne. By the time she lost the top ranking at the US Open the Russian tide was proving unstoppable.

Myskina's 6-1, 6-2 victory over compatriot Elena Dementieva in the French Open final was a non-event for the fans, but it was a watershed for Russian tennis with thousands waiting to greet the winner on her return to Moscow.

Normal service appeared to have been resumed at Wimbledon where defending champion Serena Williams powered to the final for the loss of just one set.

However she was comprehensively outplayed by the dazzling, 17-year-old Sharapova in the final as the aura that had surrounded her in the previous two years faded. *Reuters*

SHARAPOVA: Highlight of Russian charge

Football: Underdogs thrive amid racism, game-fixing scandals

LONDON—Greece and FC Porto made it a great year for underdogs.

Never having won a game in a major championship, Greece overcame 100-1 odds to win the Euro 2004 title.

And 50-1 outsider Porto—not Real Madrid or AC Milan—won the Champions League.

The surprises weren't necessarily a great advertisement for the world's most popular game.

The grind of year-round soccer seemed to wear down the world's biggest stars and weaken the most powerful national teams and clubs. Greece and Porto were tough to beat, rather than great entertainers.

Off the pitch, the picture was even less uplifting.

Racist chants, corruption and match-fixing stained the game, while two stars received lengthy doping-related bans.

A bomb threat in December forced the evacuation of Real Madrid's 70,000-seat Santiago Bernebeu stadium, bringing a stark reminder of the threat of terrorism.

Racism marred a so-called friendly in Spain, where fans bellowed monkey chants at England's black players. Similar incidents occurred in England, Hungary and the Netherlands.

Spain's national coach, Luis Aragones, kept his job despite a racial slur about Arsenal's French striker Thierry Henry. Former Man United manager Ron Atkinson quit as a TV commentator after making a derogatory comment about Marcel Desailly.

The Czech Republic and Portugal launched corruption investigations, and match-fixing marred soccer in South Africa. A bribery scandal surrounded one of the stadiums being built for the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

The English Premier League had two high-profile drug cases. Manchester United's Rio Ferdinand was suspended for eight months—he missed Euro 2004—for failing to show up for a drug test. Chelsea's Adrian Mutu was banned for seven months after testing positive for cocaine.

Italy's Francesco Totti and Senegalese World Cup striker El Hadji Diouf were each banned for three games for spitting in the face of opponents.

A European Champions League game was called off when referee Anders Frisk walked off at half time with blood streaming down his face, the target of an object thrown from the stands.

In South America, fan violence caused the death of a 15-year-old boy in Colombia. *AP*

Atlanta QB signs richest NFL contract

FLOWERY BRANCH, Georgia—Michael Vick agreed to a 10-year contract worth more than $100 million with the Atlanta Falcons that also guarantees the quarterback a National Football League-record $37 million in bonuses, an official close to the negotiations said Thursday.

Vick's contract surpasses the $98-million deal Indianapolis quarterback Peyton Manning signed in March and makes him one of the top-five best-paid players in the NFL. Manning was guaranteed $34.5 million in bonuses.

The deal was first reported by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution on its website.

The official, who requested anonymity, said Vick reached incentives in his original contract, a six-year, $62-million deal, that would have allowed him to void the 2005 and 2006 seasons next month. Had he done so, the 24-year-old Vick would have become an unrestricted free agent on March 2.

"We've said on numerous occasions that this franchise is committed to bringing a world championship to the city of Atlanta, the state of Georgia, as well as to building a sustainable winning organization consistently in the hunt," Falcons owner Arthur Blank said in a statement. "Today's contract extension for Michael, in our opinion, moves us closer to achieving those goals."

Vick, chosen Wednesday to his second Pro Bowl—the NFL's season-ending all-star game, needs 80 yards to break the single-season record for rushing by a quarterback, set by Chicago's Bobby Douglass in 1972.

In a Week 8 victory at Denver, Vick became the first player in league history to rush for 100 yards and pass for 250 in a single game. *AP*

DEL MONTE RULES
Under-14 footballers of the Benguet State University and the Del Monte Football Club compete in a tense, action-filled final of the PFF Red Ribbon football festival at the Ateneo pitch in Katipunan. Del Monte FC won the match, 1-0, to bag the Under-14 crown.

Buhain ready to tackle thankless job

By Musong R. Castillo

ERIC Buhain will vacate his table at the Philippine Sports Commission after the holidays and will assume a task that no one has actually won public adulation for.

He takes over from Eduardo Villanueva as top brass of the Games and Amusements Board, an agency in the government that is a thankless job just like all the others.

A successful amateur swimmer and the one in charge of amateur sports during his time with the PSC, Buhain will tackle an entirely different field when he leads the government agency that supervises professional sports in the country.

"We (political appointees) are put in places where the honorable President (Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo) feels we can be most effective," said Buhain, who, like all other political appointees, tendered his courtesy resignation last July 30.

"We serve at her (President Arroyo) pleasure. We don't actually ask why we are put in this agency or that, or why our resignation was accepted."

Married to the former Eileen Ermita, the representative of Batangas' first district, the 34-year-old Buhain plans to streamline operations of the GAB, but not before he sees its mandate and the limitations of its laws.

"I want to make it (GAB) as efficient as possible. To be able to address all the problems concerning professional sports and maybe improve it," Buhain said.

"There is not much difference between the GAB and the PSC, because I will be dealing with athletes also."

Even before he could occupy the GAB post, Buhain has been getting telephone calls from athletes of various sports, airing their gripes and looking for solutions.

"From pro golf, to [pro] cycling to [pro] boxing, I have heard of some of the stories through calls that have somehow made their way [to me] even though I have yet to assume the post," Buhain added.

Buhain, whose highlight as a swimmer was a six-gold medal haul in the 1991 Southeast Asian Games in Manila, formally takes over Villanueva at the start of next year after Malacañang had named Butch Ramirez as officer-in-charge of the PSC.

BUHAIN: From PSC to GAB

Once he assumes office, Buhain will look at the rules concerning National Sports Associations (NSAs) that handle professional tournaments like golf, tennis, cycling and basketball, to name a few.

"I know that these agencies have clouts over their respective sports, but the rules and regulations laid out by the GAB way before should strictly be followed.

"Directions and policies will have to be enforced. Taking over from these NSAs is not in my mind, but to see to it that the interests of the GAB, the government as a whole, is followed."

The NGAP, the national association for golf, runs the Philippine Open, an event that is the oldest national championship in Asia participated in by pros from all over the world.

He talked of golf in general, and said that he will see to it that the mess in the Professional Golfers Association of the Philippines is resolved at the soonest possible time.

Boxing controversies that have remained unresolved is high in his list of priorities as well as pro tennis and cycling events.

"Boxers have died out there, some of them were not paid by the promoter. Problems like these will be addressed."

A new task is up for Buhain in the new year. He'll have to enjoy this holiday break before, pardon the pun, he plunges into a world that will surely take up his time.

4 nabbed in shooting of soccer head coach

BOGOTA, Colombia—Authorities arrested two men and two women suspected in the shooting of Copa Libertadores winning coach Luis Fernando Montoya, who is paralyzed from the neck down, officials said Thursday.

Montoya, who led Once Caldas to the South American club championship earlier this year, "has not shown any movement of the body and is using a ventilator for breathing," doctors said in a statement Thursday.

Montoya was shot twice Wednesday as he tried to protect his wife whom robbers outside their home in Caldas, 280 kilometers (170 miles) northwest of the capital of Bogota. Doctors said one of the bullets struck him in the neck, hitting his spinal column and leaving him paralyzed from the neck down. He is in intensive care at a hospital in Medellin, Colombia.

President Alvaro Uribe said he was pained by the attack, and called it a "national tragedy."

Police on Thursday identified the suspected shooter as Javier Alonso Calle, 37, and said he was arrested along with an accomplice an hour after the attack.

Authorities also have detained two women who allegedly followed Montoya's wife, Adriana Herrera, back to her home after seeing her withdrawing cash from an automated teller machine. They then apparently contacted Calle and his friend who approached her for the cash.

Montoya, who was inside his home, noticed what was happening and rushed out to help.

"The men stopped me and demanded the money. Luis Fernando then put his hand into the bag and the guy probably thought he was going to pull a gun, so he fired," Herrera said Thursday.

Once Caldas achieved one of the biggest upsets in Copa Libertadores history in June by beating six-time champion Boca Juniors of Argentina in the two-leg final. *AP*

Dimakiling, Bitoon win

INTERNATIONAL Master Richard Bitoon defeated Fide Master Oliver Dimakiling of Davao City in tiebreak points to win the championship trophy of the just-concluded 2004 CDO Mixed Masters chess tournament Thursday night at the Ganador Grill in Cagayan de Oro City.

The former Southwestern University standout Bitoon settled for a fighting draw against GenSan bet Ferdinand Leysa with the white pieces after 45 pushes of a Sicilian skirmish in the ninth and final round to score 7.5 points, the same output of Dimakiling.

Bitoon and Dimakiling split the combined prizes of P12,000 in the three-day affair organized by national arbiter Lorenzo "Jun" Cuizon.

It was a wonderful Christmas gift for 28-year-old Navy man Bitoon, who earlier placed second and fourth in the 1st Misamis Occidental National Open in Oroquieta City and Iligan Open. ***Marlon Bernardino, Contributor***

Army blasts Kaya, bags crown

ARMY banked on the game-long brilliance of goalkeeper Edward Sacapano to blank highly touted Kaya FC, 3-0, and win the NCRFA Globe Handy Phone Super Cup football crown Wednesday at the PhilSports Complex field in Pasig City.

Sacapano foiled no less than 12 dangerous Kaya attempts as Army swept all its six assignments in the tournament organized by the National Capital Region Football Association and sponsored by Globe Handy Phone.

Nestorio Margarse gave the Armymen a 1-0 halftime lead after scoring in the 12th minute. Then Rocky Garciano and Luisito Brillantes knocked two more goals in the 32nd and 57th minutes, respectively.

Far Eastern University clinched third place by shutting out University of Santo Tomas, 2-0, in an earlier match.

NCRFA president Jose Vito B. Borromeo and general secretary Jojo Rodriguez awarded the trophies to the champions and runners-up while adidas sports marketing manager Goody Custodio presented the adidas MVP award to Army's Adonis Torres.

Adidas also gave the members of the Army squad prizes in kind.

NCRFA president Jose Vito B. Borromeo presenting the trophy to Army after winning the Globe Handy Phone Super Cup Wednesday by beating Kaya, 3-0. Also shown are jubilant members of the champion squad.

Young tennis prospects fly for Australian holiday treat

FRANCIS Casey Alcantara and Bambi Zoleta, the winners of the boys' singles and girls' singles in the inaugural leg of the Asian 14-Under Series held in Manila last September, leave on Dec. 26 for a rare Australian treat.

Seven boys and 7 girls from all over Asia will join the 23-day all-expenses-paid trip to Australia sponsored by the Australian Open.

During the trip to Australia, the Asian 14-Under team will play 4 tournaments, including the Asian 14-Under Masters, before enjoying the first four days of the 2005 Australian Open.

Alcantara and Zoleta, both 12-year-olds, will have their first stop in Sydney. The tour will then proceed to Melbourne for the last two tournaments and the Australian Open.

The Boys Team is being coached by Chris Cuarto of the Philippines while Radhika Tulpule of India is the coach for the Girls Team. The team's uniforms will be provided by Accel.

Rapid champ heads MCC tourney list

ASEAN Rapid champion Jan Nigel Galan of Valenzuela City and Divine Word College student Alex Vitualla of Calapan City lead the early entries in the Metropolitan Chess Club (MCC) unrated active chess, which starts at 10 a.m. tomorrow and in the non-master event set the next day, Dec. 27, at the 4/F of the J & F Divino Building in Quezon City.

The unrated tourney is open to all beginners, amateurs and rated players with active ratings not over 1800. The winner in this event will receive the top prize of P3,000.

Interested parties are advised to register at least before the tournament starts or call MCC at 4358412 and 0916-8521069. ***Marlon Bernardino, Contributor***

Crash spoils Aguilar Indon stint

AGUILAR: Settles for second

SENTUL, INDONESIA—A Mild incident denied 13-year-old Bosch Intelco protégé Marty Aguilar the Rotax Max junior crown recently in the final round of the Asian Karting Open Championships here.

Aguilar needed to simply finish the race to have a decent shot at the crown.

But with only 3 laps to go, he was then running second to erstwhile leader Rama Danindro of Indonesia when a backmarker, Johan Adzmi of Malaysia, made an error and collided with the two, forcing them into retirement.

With the non-finish, Zulfikhar Fahmi of Indonesia won the Rotax Juniors crown while Aguilar ended the overall runner-up, losing the chance to be the Asian representative to the 2005 World karting finals in Canary Islands Spain—which is considered karting's equivalent to F1.

Aguilar, flown here through new Bosch Intelco logistics partner Malaysian Airlines with the support of Oakley, Bosch, Accel sports, PR Autosport, Fanbi, AER Const. and Natural Treasures, qualified seventh in a 20-kart grid but his big fighting heart steered him to second and third place finishes in Saturdays heats and almost had the title at hand following his runner-up finish in the pre-finals.

"I did my best, its just sad I had to lose the championship due to a racing incident. It would have been a great opportunity for me to represent the Philippines and the Bosch-Intelco team in the World Finals," said Aguilar.

Ballad voted favorite Christmas tune

LONDON—A bittersweet ballad awash in drink, drugs and regret was voted Britain's favorite Christmas song in a poll released recently.

POGUES. Tender tale of enduring love.

The Pogues' "Fairytale of New York" was selected by British viewers of music channel VH1, beating standards including Bing Crosby's "White Christmas."

Insults

Opening with the line: "It was Christmas Eve, babe, in the drunk tank," the song features Pogues singer Shane MacGowan and Kirsty MacColl swapping insults in a foul-mouthed but ultimately tender tale of enduring love.

Band Aid's 1984 charity single, "Do They Know It's Christmas?," came second in the poll. This year's remake of the song was in fifth place.

The Top 10:

1. "Fairytale Of New York," The Pogues and Kirsty MacColl, 1987;
2. "Do They Know Its Christmas?," Band Aid, 1984;
3. "Last Christmas," Wham!, 1984;
4. "Merry Xmas Everybody," Slade, 1973;
5. "Do They Know It's Christmas," Band Aid 20, 2004;
6. "All I Want For Christmas is You," Mariah Carey, 1994;
7. "I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday," Wizzard 1973;
8. "White Christmas," Bing Crosby, 1977;
9. "Happy Xmas (War Is Over)," John Lennon, 1972, and
10. "Stay Another Day," East 17 1994

AP

Cage talks about new marriage

TAIPEI, Taiwan—Nicolas Cage said recently he's reluctant to say he's happy in his new marriage to a 20-year-old former sushi waitress.

CAGE. Afraid someone will take the happiness away.

"I want to say that I'm content," Cage told reporters in the Taiwanese capital, Taipei.

"If I say I'm happy, that's too fragile of a word," Cage said. "I'm afraid someone will take the happiness away."

The "Leaving Las Vegas" star recently married Alice Kim, his third wife. He was previously married to Lisa Marie Presley and Patricia Arquette lasted six years.

First meeting

The actor, who is twice his wife's age, said he met Kim at a Los Angeles nightclub. On their first meeting, she abruptly left after chatting for just five minutes. Cage said he wrote her a note asking why she walked away and he gave her his phone number.

AP

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4	LASTIKMAN	10:50 1:10 3:30 5:50 8:10
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6	SPIRIT OF THE GLASS	12:35 2:45 4:55 7:05 9:15
7	MANO PO 3	12:30 2:45 5:00 7:15 9:30
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5	SPIRIT OF THE GLASS	11:30 1:40 3:50 6:00 8:10
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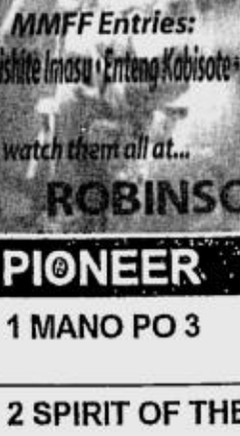
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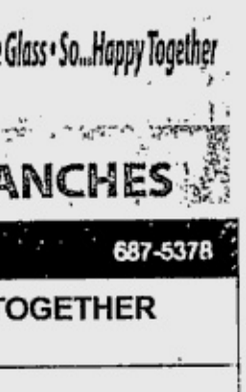

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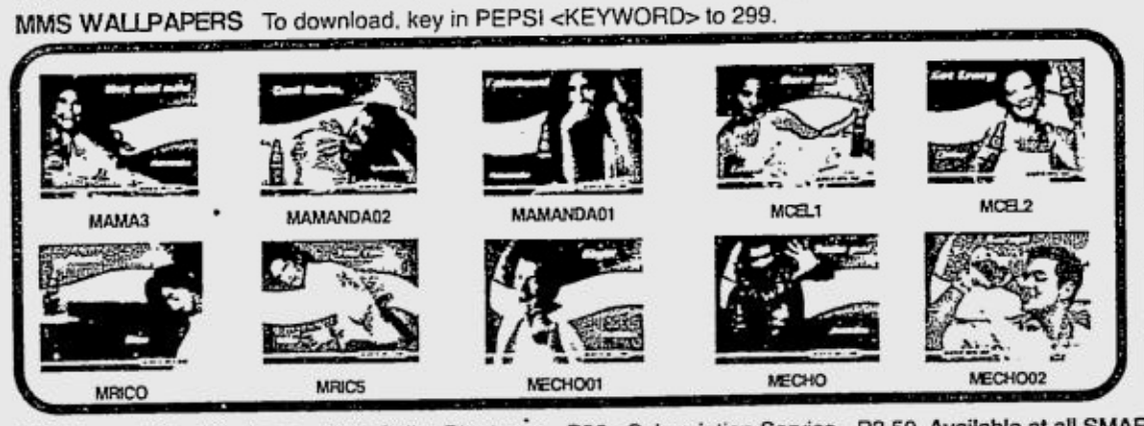

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	Sunday Driving	SUNDRIVE
	Umaaraw Umuulan	ARAWULAN
	Balisong	BALISONG
Jennifer Lopez	Ain't It Funny	FUNNY
	If You Had My Love	IFUHADMYLUV
	Jenny From the Block	JENYFRMDBLCK
	Let's Get Loud	GETLOUD
	Play	PLAY
Beyonce	Baby Boy	BABYBOY
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	Balisong	100897
South Border	Playa	100613
	The Show	100614
Beyonce	Baby Boy	101466
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AGUSTIN. Wants to experience a real winter wonderland.

Marvin Agustin, other celebrities cite their favorite Christmas symbols

By Jocelyn Valle

MARVIN Agustin dreams of a "white" Christmas. "That's because snow is my favorite Yuletide symbol," he shares. I've seen snow when I went to Japan, but it wasn't Christmas then. I spent the holidays in the States last year, but it only snowed in New York after I left for California. I hope I can experience a real winter wonderland *talaga* the next time I travel"

Decorations

Marvin also enjoys the sight of a Christmas tree, particularly the one that his mother decorates. "OA *kasi s'ya sa mga palamuti kaya nakaka-aliw*," he laughs.

Jay Aquitania also likes Christmas trees. "It is where we put our Christmas cards," he explains. Fellow newbie Jill Yulo agrees with Jay's choice. "Our Christmas tree is special to me because it's been with my family since I was 10 years old," says the ABS-CBN talent, who will turn 15 on Dec. 28. "Too bad, though, that I only get one gift for both Christmas and my birthday."

For Ciara Sotto, the Belen (a tableau of Christ's birth) is the best representation of the Yuletide season. "It's Jesus' birthday, and He's the star of the season," she reasons.

Drew Arellano declares that his favorite Christmas symbol is the star. "It's placed on top of the Christmas tree, that's why everybody looks at it. It symbolizes guidance. *Kailangan natin 'yan sa buhay,*" he stresses.

Star

"Lastikman's" Danilo Barrios agrees: "But, I don't have a star in my condo yet

MARVIN/ A2-2

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'tis the season to make great things possible Globe HANDYPHONE

Indie music dominates music scene in 2004

BAMBOO. Walked away with five wins at the recent NU Rock awards.

By Noelani Torre

THE YEAR 2004 witnessed the slow winding down of everyone's enthusiasm for all things acoustic, a resurgence of energy in the independent music scene, and a rise in copyright infringement activities (otherwise known as piracy) despite all the dramatic measures taken against them.

Nevertheless, it's been a productive year, especially for younger musicians like Bamboo Mañalac, Kitchie Nadal, Sarah Geronimo and Erik Santos.

Older and more established stars have also had a good year, however. Regine Velasquez's "Covers" (Viva) turned platinum less than a month after its release, and Ogie Alcasid's "I Am a Singer" also did well in the charts. And the self-titled "Soul Diva," Nina, released "Smile" at the beginning of the year.

Frontman

Bamboo, former vocalist of Rivermaya, is now the frontman of a new rock band called, er, Bamboo which released their debut album, "Noypi," earlier this year.

The band walked away with five wins at this year's NU Rock Awards: band/artist of the year, song of the year (the ubiquitous "Noypi"), vocalist of the year (Bamboo), drummer of the year (Vic Mercado), and listener's choice. They've also been nominated for best band (Philippines) at the upcoming MTV Asia Awards, along with four other bands, including—gasp!—Rivermaya. (Now *that* would be interesting to watch—and if you want to get your own two cents' worth in, you can vote at the MTV Asia website.)

Another former vocalist of a well-known band (Mojofly)—Kitchie Nadal—also released her debut album this year.

The self-titled disc also has Bamboo's Vic Mercado on drums, and its songs have been enjoying heavy airplay for sometime now.

Sarah Geronimo and Erik Santos, both products of talent searches, also released albums this year, and their songs have proven to be popular with all kinds of audiences (though Christian Bautista, who was eliminated from Santos' competition, seems to be more conspicuous than Santos).

As for acoustic groups, well, they're still out there, and they're still raking in the chips, but they no longer dominate the scene the way they did last year.

Acoustic

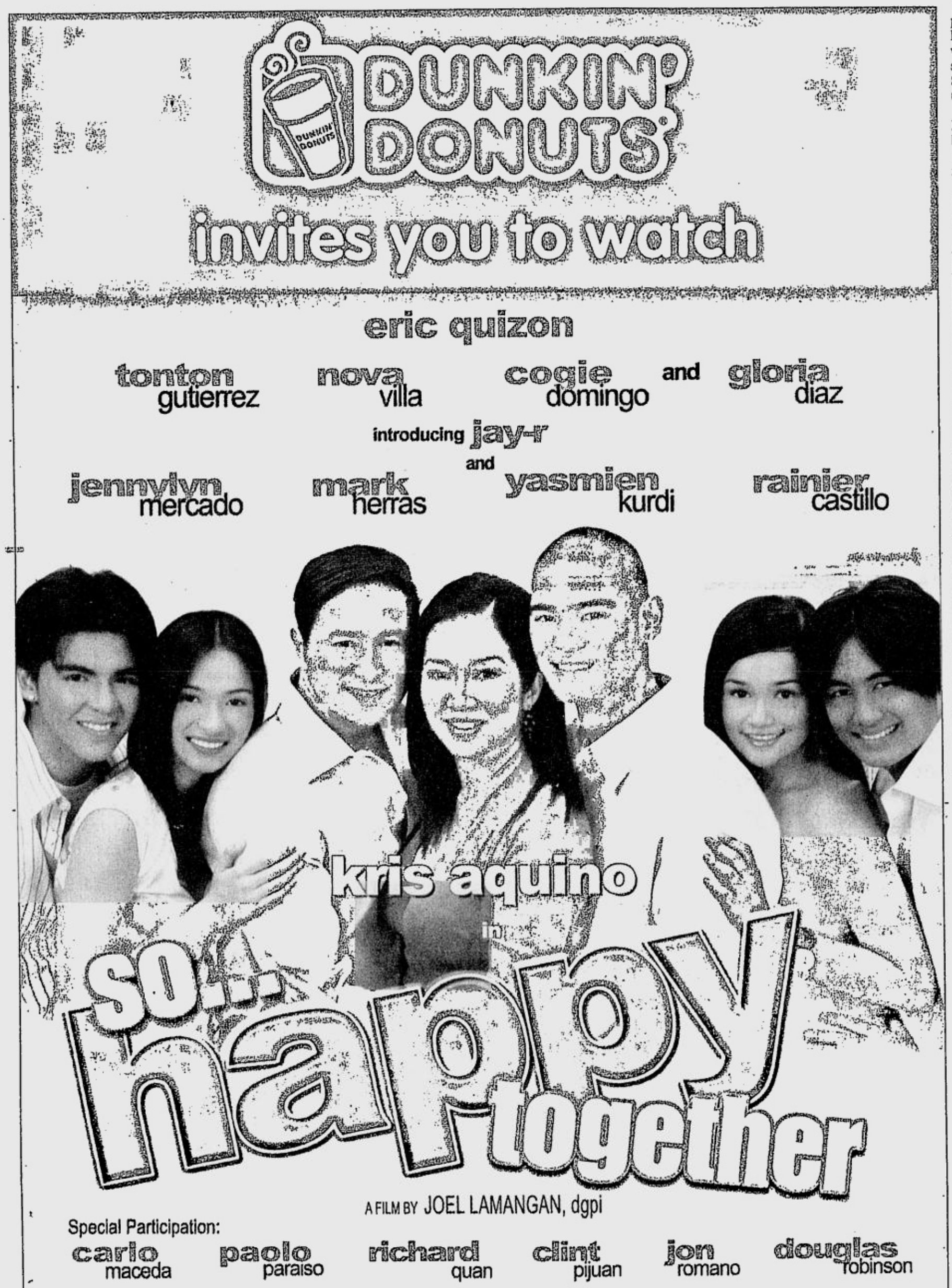
Nyoy Volante and company (Cocoy Aranas, Glenn Dalit and Jerome Nuñez) released their second album this year "NV&M," another acoustic collection of covers and originals.

Pop-rock band Sugarfree also released its sophomore album, "Dramachine." A successful follow-up to their winning debut, the album signals better things to come from this group in the future.

It's the indie scene, however, that has been particularly active this year. The general public wouldn't have heard of most of the groups with releases under independent labels, but some of these—like Imago and Radioactive Sago Project—have already established themselves.

The two groups were once under Viva, but have now found new, freer lives with indie labels: Imago and Sago released "Take 2" (Thirdline) and "Urban Gulaman" (Terno), respectively.

The piracy problem continues to nag at the industry, however, and not even the struggling indies are spared.



TURNER. 65th birthday.

Tina Turner still rocking in her adopted homeland

GENEVA—Tina Turner, who has just celebrated her 65th birthday, is enjoying her quiet life in Switzerland, but she has no plans to retire from performing.

The rock diva, who four years ago completed her final world tour, still performs live in Switzerland, her latest was on the day she turned 65, the Swiss weekly Schweizer Illustrierte said. She has no plans to leave her adopted homeland in the Alps.

Indian goddess

Turner, who has lived for 10 years in the exclusive Zurich district of Kuesnacht, recently put out a new CD, and will appear as the title character in a new film, "The Goddess."

The practicing Buddhist will play the Indian goddess Shakti, her first acting role since starring alongside Mel Gibson in 1985's "Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdrome."

"Switzerland is wonderful," Turner told the magazine. "I love the people, the lakes, the mountains—simply everything!"

Turner, who was born Anna Mae Bullock on Nov. 26, 1939, in Brownsville, Tennessee, has lived in Switzerland since 1994 with Erwin Bach, a former EMI record executive and her partner of 17 years. They also have a ski chalet in Klosters, the luxurious Swiss alpine resort.

AP

AQUINO. Stopped believing in Santa Claus at age five.

Marvin . . . From page A2-1

because I don't have Christmas decorations in there," he offers. "*Puro* toys *lang*. My mother loves to spruce up the house, but she lives in Tarlac with my siblings. But, I make it a point to visit them, especially on Christmas."

Anna Capri is fascinated with the jolly old man in red. "Santa Claus symbolizes gift-giving. I love presents. After all, there's an inner child in all of us," she grins.

Carlo Aquino, who's in the cast of the star-studded "Mano Po 3," concurs. "Kids go through that stage of believing in Santa Claus, but I stopped at age five. We still have a Santa Claus doll at home, though," he shares.

FAMILY TIES

Vilma Santos dotes on son Luis

By Remy Umerez

A WEEK before Christmas, the Star for All Seasons, Vilma Santos, shared with us her thoughts on son Luis and her first film in three years, "Mano Po 3":

She is thankful for the support of her family. When "Mano Po 3" was offered to her, Vilma sought the advice of husband Ralph and son Luis. They read the script, and exchanged views on scenes that they found objectionable. In everything she does, communication lines with her son are open.

Fulfilling task

For Vilma, raising her sons Luis and Ryan is a most fulfilling task. "My parents taught me to be God-fearing, respectful, responsible and law-abiding. Luis has never given me headaches. I am very liberal, but once you betray my trust, *mag-ingat ka!* Scorpio trait *ito*. Luis knows that, *at binusog ko siya sa pangaral*. I always tell him that he is old enough to differentiate right from wrong, so he should never do something that he'd regret later on," she says.

No secrets

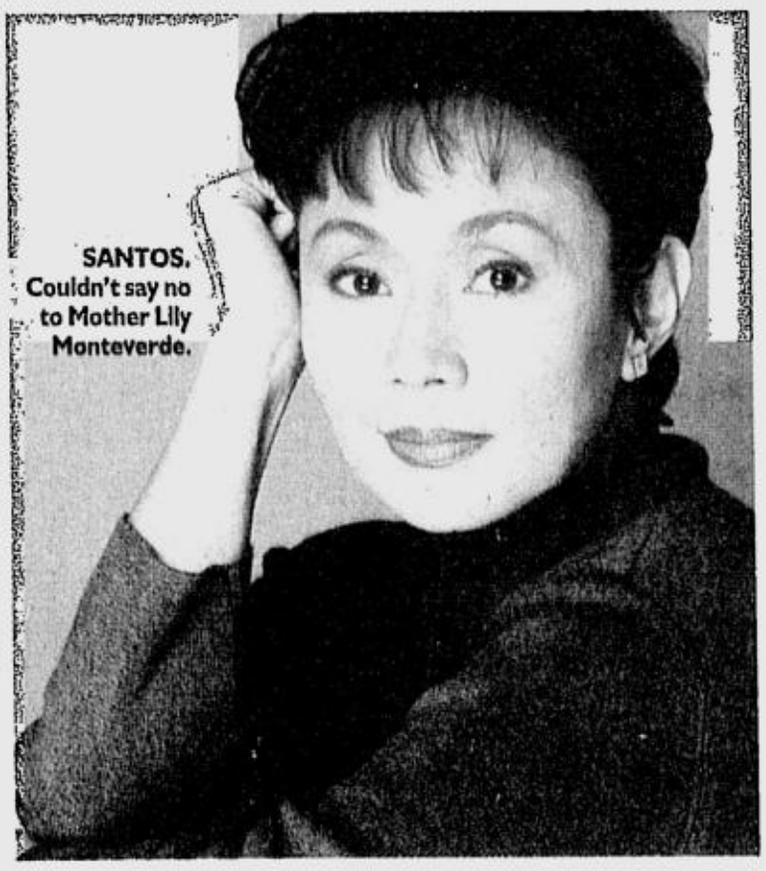
Although Luis has his own condo, he stays with Vi most of the time. There are no secrets between mother and son— according to Vi, Luis tells her *everything*! On a few occasions, he'd introduce a girl to Vilma, and she'd know instantly if she was special to him or not.

Vilma observes that Luis is more focused now. He dreams of owning his own restaurant-bar. And she's surprised at how thrifty Luis has become—a trait that the actress also possesses.

The Lipa City mayor ends the year with her filmfest entry, "Mano Po 3." In this last compilation of Tsinoy tales, Vilma is cast as a crusader, a mother of three children and supportive wife to Paul Yang, her devoted husband of 23 years. Then, her first love, Michael Lim (now a widower) resurfaces, and she finds herself in love again.

Three reasons

Vilma cited three reasons why she accepted "Mano Po 3": It gave her the opportunity to work with Christopher de Leon again; she couldn't say no to Mother Lily, who has produced some of Vilma's unforgettable movies ("Sister Stella L," "Broken Marriage" and "Relasyon"), and the film's interesting story centers on a family that collapses due to infidelity.



SANTOS. Couldn't say no to Mother Lily Monteverde.

New York critics pick 'Sideways' as top film

FOXX. Best actor for "Ray."

NEW YORK—"Sideways" has taken another step forward with critics, winning top honors from the New York Film Critics Online.

The group named the comedy, about mismatched best friends on a wine-tasting road trip, as the year's best film. Two of the movie's stars, Thomas Haden Church and Virginia Madsen, won the supporting actor and actress categories.

Jamie Foxx was named best actor for his uncanny portrayal of Ray Charles in "Ray," and Imelda Staunton won the best actress award for playing a housekeeper who secretly performs abortions in 1950s England in "Vera Drake."

Epic

Martin Scorsese was named the top director for the Howard Hughes epic, "The Aviator," and Charlie Kaufman won screenplay honors for "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind," about a lovelorn man who wants to erase his ex-girlfriend from his memory.

The Los Angeles Film Critics Association also chose "Sideways" as the year's best film, and the National Board of Review of listed it among the top 10 movies of the year.

Other picks

Other 2004 picks from the New York Film Critics Online, composed of writers who are either exclusively online or who are broadcast or print critics with a strong online presence:

Cinematography: "Hero," Christopher Doyle.

Animated film: "The Incredibles."

Foreign language film: "The Motorcycle Diaries."

Documentary: (tie) "Broadway: The Golden Age" and "Super Size Me."

Breakthrough performance: Topher Grace ("p.s." and "In Good Company.")

Debut director: Joshua Marston ("Maria Full of Grace"). *AP*

Arts and culture

From page A2-6

view of life is significantly enriched. Why can't viewers in the Philippines be given the pleasure of savoring the best that the cultural world has to offer?

Excitement

The lively arts, history, biography, cultural anthropology, the richness of past artistic traditions and the excitement of modern-day innovations—these are rich and rewarding inputs that we should all have access to and benefit from.

The enjoyment of art and culture should not be restricted to a privileged and moneyed few, but should be made available to all cable TV subscribers. Cable channels specializing in this would make for much better and inspiring viewing than all those practically useless channels in strange languages that crowd our cable TV spectrum.

Reaching out

Even if you aren't an arts and culture buff, you should give the field a go on TV, because good art has a great way of reaching out to viewers in a subtly compelling and affecting way. Just give the arts a chance to get to you, and they will. —And you'll be a better person for it.

So, do join our call for arts and culture channels on our cable TV spectrum. We all need the illuminating, inspiring insights that the arts can bring, especially at this time, when darkness and despair hulk over our political and entertainment landscape.

See'emall!

AYALA CINEMAS

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2 PANAGHOY SA SUBA	2 ENTENG KABISOTE	2 AISHITE IMASU	6 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS	THX 2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10, 11:30	2 AISHITE IMASU
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS		THX 3 LASTIKMAN 12:50, 3:15, 5:40, 8:05, 10:30	7 ENTENG KABISOTE	3 LASTIKMAN 1:50, 4:15, 6:40, 9:05, 11:30	3 SIGAW
4 ENTENG KABISOTE	3 PANAGHOY SA SUBA	4 HAPPY TOGETHER		4 AISHITE IMASU 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10, 11:30	4 HAPPY TOGETHER
5 MANO PO 3	4 HAPPY TOGETHER	GB1 (Greenbelt 1)		5 SIGAW 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10, 11:30	5 MANO PO 3
		1 PANAGHOY SA SUBA 11:30, 2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30			
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Ayala Cinemas take pleasure in giving their loyal moviegoers the chance to meet & greet the stars of the 2004 Metro Manila Film Festival this yuletide season.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

December 26 12:30 PM Market! Market! cinema lobby 2:30 PM Glorietta 4 cinema lobby 3:30 PM Greenbelt 3 cinema lobby	LASTIKMAN Characters in parade
December 27 4:00 PM Glorietta 4 cinema lobby	SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
December 28 4:00 PM Glorietta 1 cinema lobby	ENTENG KABISOTE
December 30 12:00 NN Market! Market!	LASTIKMAN
December 30 2:00 PM Glorietta 4 cinema lobby	LASTIKMAN

AYALA CINEMAS AYALA MALLS Lovemall!

The 30th Metro Manila Film Festival opens December 25 in Ayala Cinemas

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Magic tricks exposed

By Nestor U. Torre

WHEN I was a kid, one of the best treats I looked forward to was going to a magic show with my folks. I was in awe of the performing magicians as they pulled sundry animals out of hats and boxes, cut complaissant, young women in half, made grown men vanish in front of our eyes, put members of the audience in a trance to make them float in mid-air—etc.!

What strange, alien world did these awesome magi of the impossible come from? What inexplicable powers they possessed!

Like many other children in the audience, I wished I could be as preternaturally potent as they were.

BLAINE. Magus of the impossible.

But, when I tried to duplicate even their simplest tricks at home, I fumbled and flubbed, and even my pet puppy sniffed in petulant disdain.

Psychic

Years later, I watched even more dazzling prestidigitators strut their psychic stuff in posh venues both here and abroad, and I was even more dazzled.

One time, I volunteered to be the object of a name magician's expert moves, and I was stunned when he correctly announced the numbers that made up my TIN code, in exactly the right sequence! Did he have an eye inside my pocket, or what?

And, on cable TV, I gawked at the sight of internationally famous magicians like David Copperfield and David Blaine, who made entire skyscrapers disappear. What in the *world* was going on?

New show

Of course, we suspected that it was all really polished and expert trickery, but I couldn't prove it—until I recently watched several telecasts of the new show, "Magicians' Biggest Tricks Finally Revealed," telecast Monday nights on Star World.

One by one, professional magicians exposed the complex ways they have been able to pull the wool over our eyes for centuries:

The rabbit pulled out of a hat was there all along, hiding in a secret compartment in the magician's signature chapeaux.

The lady floating in mid-air was made to levitate, not by the magician's gravity-defying powers, but by a rising mechanical platform that the audience couldn't see!

Cut in half

The woman cut in half or stabbed by swords was shown hiding in a small, secret compartment, safe and snug as a bug in a rug.

All in all, I've seen dozens of magic acts exposed as elaborate tricks on the show. For some reason, however, knowing all about the trickery hasn't drastically diminished my fascination with magic.

—Only, this time, I'm fascinated, not with the magical results, but with the complicated moves that the magician and his well-trained assistants have to go through to dazzle their audience into a spectacularly awe-struck suspension of disbelief!

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'Incredibles' tops list of nominees for animated film awards

BURBANK, California—"The Incredibles," Pixar Animation Studios' tale of a superhero family struggling with supervillians and suburban life, tops the list of nominees for the 32nd annual Annie Awards.

"The Incredibles" got 16 nominations while DreamWorks' "Shrek 2" and "Shark Tale" had seven each, according to a Monday announcement by the International Animated Film Society, which will present the awards on Jan. 30 in Glendale.

PIXAR'S latest blockbuster earned 16 nominations.

"SHREK 2." Competes for the Annie's top plum.

Hero

Nominations for "The Incredibles" include best animated feature, directing, music and voice acting for Samuel L. Jackson, who plays the hero Frozone, and Brad Bird as the fashion designer, Edna Mode.

Other nominees for top animated feature include "Shrek 2," "Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence" and "The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie."

Nominated for best animated television production were the "SpongeBob SquarePants" show, "My Life as a Teenage Robot," "Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends," "Star Wars: The Clone Wars" and "Batman."

Society members will vote on the nominations, which were made by a committee. AP

What was the last Filipino film you saw?

By Nestor U. Torre

WHEN we conduct workshops and deliver talks on media in different parts of the country, we get asked a lot questions about the current state of the Filipino movie industry. At first, we answer the questions agreeably enough.

After a while, however, we sense that some of the queries are coming from left field, because the people asking them simply want us to confirm their exceedingly low opinion of local films.

To determine exactly where they're coming from, we ask them the title of the last Filipino movie they've viewed. Eight times out of 10, it turns out to be a film that was screened years, even decades ago!

Intellectually disingenuous

We make a point of underscoring this, because it shows how dishonest, or at best intellectually disingenuous, some critics of local movies are.

How can you judge the Filipino movie industry's products in 2004 if the last time you watched a local film, Ian Veneracion was still wearing short pants, and Jimmy Fabregas still had all of his hair? Give us a break!

It's OK with us if you disdain or even loathe local movies, as long as you've viewed one film recent enough for your view to be current enough to be taken seriously.

That's one of the problems with people who profess to evaluate the state of local movies today: They simply aren't serious about their chosen task, and blithely dismiss the works of our filmmakers without putting in the viewing hours required for their views to deserve attention.

Fashionable

They do this because it's currently fashionable to look down on local film products. But, they don't remind themselves that the local movie industry is the only one we have, so the best way to relate to it is not to pulverize it with utter scorn, but to criticize its bad elements *and* boost the people in it who are trying to do good work.

It's also distressing to note that many people "analyze" movie without really understanding how the film medium works, as opposed to literature or the theater.

These smug and lazy critics don't do any good, and in fact make the situation worse, because their comments aren't worth the saliva they slide on.

By all means, viewers should speak up about the quality of the filmic entertainment they're watching, but their views should be based on real knowledge, not presumptuousness; on genuine insight, not bitchy bias.

It's good that being film-savvy has become fashionable in these parts, but the movies are too important and powerful to be treated merely as fodder for idle chatter at cocktail parties.

Touchstones

How can amateur critics come up with views on movies that deserve to be taken seriously? First, they should genuinely *love* films. Next, they should have seen the best products of the local movie industry, so they have good touchstones by which to measure the new films they view.

It would also help a lot if they work really hard to free themselves of colonial mentality. Too many film buffs here automatically look down on Filipino movie products because they've been conditioned to believe that anything "local" *has* to be inferior to the "imported" stuff.

Prospective evaluators should then learn to understand the visual language of film, and go on to view as many great movies that they can, to see the filmic principles brilliantly applied.

Finally, they should understand how the local filmmaking situation operates, as opposed to Hollywood's vaunted way of doing things. In real knowledge, context is everything!

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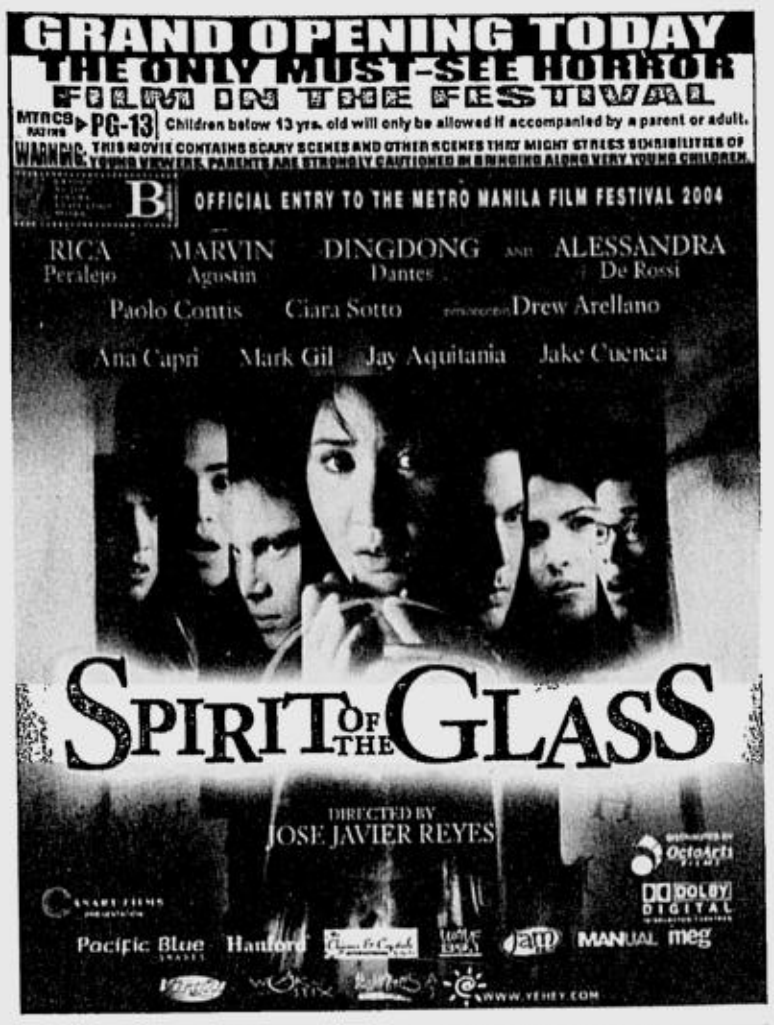

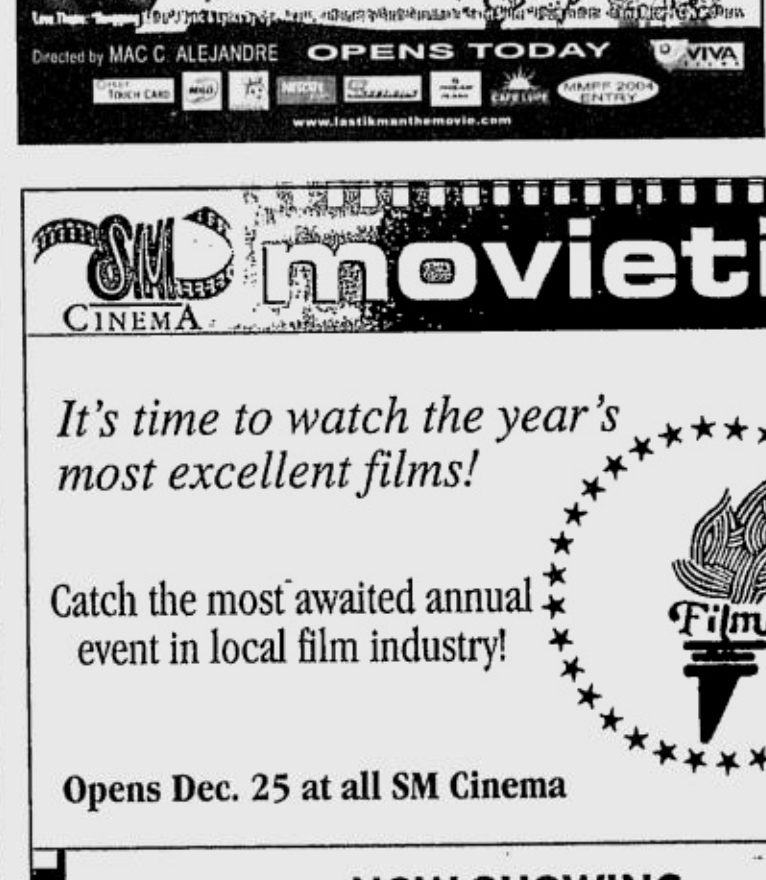

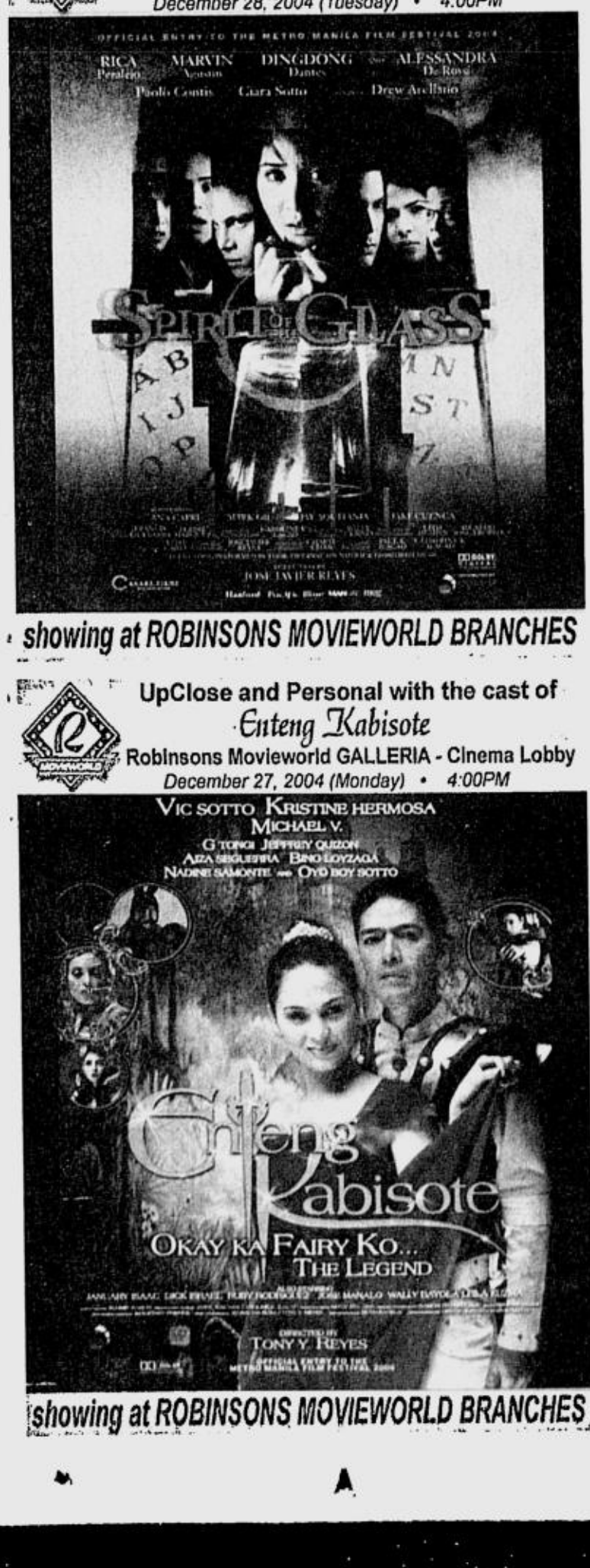

Album showcases Diane Warren's instinctive musical touch

By Noelani Torre

THERE are no misses in the 20-song CD that is "Diane Warren Presents: Love Songs." Each track here is a certified hit, from album opener "I Don't Want to Be Your Friend" (Nina) to the album's final song, "How Can We Be Lovers?" (Michael Bolton). This collection has been heavily plugged on the radio for the past few months, and we can assure listeners that whatever it is the gushing advertisers has been saying about this CD is true.

Warren has been making hit songs for 20 years now, and she's one of the few songwriters whose name is instantly recognizable to the general public.

DION AND AEROSMITH. Their top hits were composed by Warren.

If you're one of the few who doesn't know who she is, however, no doubt you'll be familiar with most of the songs in her repertoire.

Movies

A lot of her songs have been written for movies. In this collection, that would be Aerosmith's "I Don't Want to Miss a Thing" (from "Armageddon"), Celine Dion's "Because You Loved Me" ("Up Close and Personal"), Christina Aguilera's "I Turn to You" ("Space Jam"), Trisha Yearwood's "How Do I Live" ("Con Air"), Faith Hill's "There You'll Be" ("Pearl Harbor"), Eric Clapton's "Blue Eyes Blue" ("Runaway Bride"), and LeAnn Rimes' "Can't Fight the Moonlight" ("Coyote Ugly").

Also included here is Shanice's "Saving Forever for You," the theme song to one of the '90s biggest TV shows, "Beverly Hills 90210." —That's half of the playlist already!

Countless films have her songs in their soundtracks, and at the rate she's going, no doubt a hundred more will feature them, as well. Her "children" (as she refers to them) have earned her nominations: four Golden Globes, six Oscars and nine Grammys. She's also had her own star installed on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and she's just been inducted into the Hall of Fame.

She's had numerous Top 100 songs, and her compositions have helped enhance and revive careers. "I Don't Want to Miss a Thing" became Aerosmith's first No.1 single, "Because You Loved Me" was Celine Dion's biggest hit, and "How Do I Live"—which had versions by Trisha Yearwood and LeAnn Rimes—hit No. 2 in Billboard for Yearwood, and went to No. 1 on the adult contemporary chart for Rimes.

Catchy melodies

"Love Songs" shows us the reasons for Warren's success—a gift for creating catchy melodies and lyrics, an emotionality infused with sincerity, and a well-honed instinct for the cinematic and the popular. "Where she goes, the public goes", is Hollywood producer Jerry Bruckheimer's description of Warren. He ought to know, being a trendsetter himself.

You can't go wrong with a collection like this—even the most hardcore non-pop lovers will find themselves singing along—or belting—if they don't watch themselves. That's what the Warren touch does.

Arts and culture channels needed on cable TV

By Nestor U. Torre

CABLE TV operators boast that their subscribers in the Philippines now number in the hundreds of thousands, so their channels now provide hefty competition to the "free" TV networks who have lorded it over the local television scene for the past 50 years.

Viewers pay hefty subscription fees for cable TV service because they're fed up with the limited choices, numerous commercials, "least common denominator" programming, and other irritants on free TV.

They also welcome the opportunity to watch programs from all over the world, not just the United States. This gives them a richer, deeper appreciation of life in the world, which the TV medium has transformed into a truly global village.

Specialized

Cable TV subscribers love getting extra servings of movies, news, sports, lifestyle features, documentary, talk and other topics, depending on the specialized channels their cable service carries.

For our part, we find ourselves tuning in most frequently to the Discovery, National Geographic, Etc., EWTN, Hallmark, Star World, Spanish, AXN, CNN, Star Movies, Animal Planet, HBO, Cinemax and NHK Channels.

While we appreciate the viewing bounties these cable channels provide, however, we feel deprived in the field of arts and culture. We know that there are cable channels that devote themselves exclusively to this significant field, so we urge our cable service suppliers to include them in their cable lineup.

In fact, we pledge here that, the *minute* we see a supplier include an arts and culture channel in its service's line-up, we will shift to that supplier. And we urge other arts and culture buffs to do the same.

When we're abroad, we view good cable TV programs on the arts, and our

ARTS/ A2-3

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Adding salt to injury, babbling books and other boob-tube booboos

By Nestor U. Torre

HERE'S a fresh batch of boob-tube booboos, to make the season especially bright. Merry Christmas!:

BOOB TUBE BooBoos

Hosts: What keeps you going despite the many problems you've had this year? What do you tell yourself to lift your spirits?

Guest: I tell myself, it's not end of the world. *Siguro*, this is but part of my life and trial.

(Wow, *bigat*.)

* * *

Host: What do you do when temptation comes? After all, show biz is full of temptations!

Guest: Well, I admit, sometimes I fall. After all, we are just but human!

(We are just but human *daw, o*.)

* * *

Host: Why is this ingredient important in this dish that you are preparing?

Guest chef: Because this is the one that will keep the *ano* of this dish *kwan*.

(Thanks for being so—specific!)

* * *

Host: What do you say to people who object to the new procedure of your agency?

Guest: They should give it a chance to work, because it's in keeping with the obligatory, regulatory and predatory functions of our office.

(Predatory functions? How truthful can you get?)

* * *

Host: How are you now, after the troubles you had with your career and your marriage?

Guest: With the thanks of God, my life is now a stable!

(Do tell!)

* * *

Host: What is your reaction to the nasty things your husband's family has said against you after you broke up with him?

Guest: It's so painful, it's adding salt to injury!

(Adding salt to injury! Ouch, that really hurts!)

* * *

Host: Did you expect to win the award?

Guest: That night, expected *ko talaga—puwedeng oo, at puwedeng hindi*.

(Make up your mind!)

* * *

Host: Weren't you too bitchy in your criticism of her performance?

Guest: It was not bitchy at all—it was very matter of factly.

(*Ay*, it was very matter of factly!)

* * *

Host: What message do you have for your many fans in the Philippines, after your show yesterday?

Guest: I know Filipino people love me, so I will prove them as a return.

(Ah, please repeat?)

* * *

Host: Can you describe what makes your resort special?

Guest: It's all the running water we have, the beautiful sight and sound it makes—from waterfalls, the water goes down to bubbling books!

(*Ay*, bubbling books!)

* * *

Host: What made you decide to cast (name of actor) in your new musical for children?

Guest: He was a natural choice. *Kilalang-kilala siya ng mga bata*, especially *ng mga* kids!

(*Kulit!*)

* * *

Host: What do mature people need to keep in mind about the food they eat, if they want to live a long and healthy life?

Guest: They should avoid food with a lot of high cholesteroil.

(*Ay*, high cholesteroil!)

* * *

Host: The people want to know, will anything happen to this latest case of hidden wealth?

Guest: Of course. We have the political will, so the case will be pursued jealously.

(One man's zealously is another man's jealously...)

* * *

Host: What is a sign if there's something wrong with your heart?

Guest: You know something is wrong *kapag nagpa*-palpiting *ang puso!*

(*Ay, nag*-palpiting *ang puso!*)

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SATURDAY Special

Susan Roces: The face still refreshes

By Boots Anson Roa

WHEN Jesusa "Inday" Levy Sonora, 15, was discovered by Sampaguita pictures in the mid-'50s, producer and star maker Dr. Jose "Pinggot" Perez, quickly dubbed his latest Bacolod find "the face that refreshes."

That was to be her image-building and promo "packaging," the USP or unique selling proposition for the studio's latest build-up star.

Rightly so, for Susan's beauty, then and now, not only has a refreshing appeal, it also evokes sweetness and light, almost permeated with the essence of delicate roses.

SUSAN (left) and Boots in 1974, with their respective daughters, Mary Grace and Chiqui.

BOOTS (left) and Susan again in 1993, this time with Roa's grandchildren.

Chief competitor

Susan's chief competitor then for Movie Queenship—in the tradition of the Gloria Romero-Nida Blanca, Nora Aunor-Vilma Santos, and Sharon Cuneta-Maricel Soriano rivalries—was Amalia Fuentes.

Unlike Amalia, known to be the all-time most beautiful face in Philippine movies, Susan was no stunner and raving beauty with perfect facial features; hers was a soft and quiet allure that grew on you, enhanced by her cool while confident demeanor. She was and remains Poise personified.

Susan's earliest box-office hit for Sampaguita was "Boksingera," the story of a demure teener who metamorphosed into a local boxing "champ" after hurdling rigorous training and overcoming tough challenges.

Shades of the widowed Susan Roces, who last week "packed a wallop," while maintaining grace, on her husband FPJ's political and media adversaries, both perceived and proven!

Shock value

Talk about shock value and counter-image moves! When asked how she could confront issues and even entities that Ronnie kept his distance from, Susan readily alluded to "Truth setting you free."

Up to the early '60s, when Susan decided to go "freelance," she remained one of Sampaguita's prized contract stars, scoring blockbusters through wholesome formula comedies, musicals and dramas where she was regularly paired with heartthrob Eddie Gutierrez, alongside the Amalia Funetes-Juancho Gutierrez love team.

Curiuosly, all of them ended up with different life partners: Eddie with Annabelle Rama; Amalia with Romeo Vasquez; Juancho with Gloria Romero, and Susan with her unlikeliest leading man, horse-riding and gun-toting action star, Fernando Poe Jr.

Susan was hardly associated with action flicks, so the pairing was considered a mismatch by many, especially since Susan had a non-show biz boyfriend at the time.

After FPJ entered the scene, fans of the "*kilig*" musical-comedy Susan-Eddie tandem were initially disappointed: They felt Susan was too fragile and demure to fall for a rugged action star.

Looking back over the last two weeks, Susan showed that demureness and grace are not incompatible with strength amidst pain and pressure.

Weddings

Two Poe-Sonora weddings, civil on Dec. 16, and church on Dec. 25, 1968, were front page materials, with no less than then first couple, Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, giving up their Christmas morning for the Santuario de San Jose, Greenhills nuptials.

But, only after erroneous headlines that announced that Susan had eloped with then Sen. Soc Rodrigo's "son," Pempe. Pempe, as is common knowledge now, is short for Josefina, Susan's best friend and confidante of long standing!

As media has reviewed the Ronnie-Susan marriage, it has turned out to be a lasting and stable partnership of 36 years. FPJ, in characteristic modesty, often pointed to Susan, who he had endearingly nicknamed "Swanie," as the marriage's most formidable component

A marriage staple was Susan's constant deference to Ronnie for major domestic and career decisions, despite her being her very own person. At times, even menu selection—what seafood to match his favorite native salad—would be referred to Ronnie beforehand.

While presumably, she already knew or had her answers, her catch phrase was generally: "Let me check what Ronnie's orders and preferences are." Clearly, it was her way of giving her husband importance and sovereignty in the Poe household.

Following her husband's earlier career move in the late '60s, Susan also launched her own film ventures via "Rosas" Productions, the domestic drama and comedy arm of FPJ Productions.

In 1974, I was complimented no end when Susan asked me to share with her the title of her company's "Dalawa ang Nagdalang-tao sa Akin."

Two friends

It was the story of two friends, one of whom sacrificed to enable the other to bear a child through a uterine implant. The film co-starred Ramil Rodriguez and Ronaldo Valdez and featured child wonder Dranreb, the then five-year-old son of Bernard Belleza and Divina Valencia.

As was affirmed by the movies (like "Angelita, Mga Mata ng Diyos" with Julie Vega) and TV shows we later did with Susan, professionalism was her passion, alongside her weakness for food.

Like Ronnie, Susan loves good food, but has a greater penchant for preparing *kalderos* and *bandejados* to feed co-stars, staff and crew. And here, we talk of breakfast, lunch and dinner fare, plus *merienda* regularly thrown in!

On the set of Regal's present Metro Manila Filmfest entry, "Mano Po 3," where she is not even in the cast, she and Ronnie would send sandwiches, siopao, siomai and *pancit*, and at one time, even banana-leaf-packed *adobo* complete with *talong* and *itlog na maalat*. We, in the cast

SUSAN/ A3-3

SATURDAY*Special*

Hollywood is coming to Bangkok

WEAVER. Topbills the dramatic feature, "Imaginary Heroes."

BANGKOK, Thailand—Cannes, Sundance, Toronto . . . and Bangkok? With its glitzy cast of directors and stars, next month's international film festival will bring Tinseltown to this Southeast Asian metropolis.

Jeremy Irons, Sigourney Weaver, Oliver Stone and Andrew Lloyd Webber are among a host of big names who will descend on Bangkok for its Eighth International Film Festival, Jan. 13-24, its organizers said recently.

4,000 films

About 180 films from nearly 50 countries—chosen from almost 4,000 films—will be screened durjng the 12-day event.

"I'm convinced this is a breakthrough year for Bangkok," Craig Prater, executive director of the festival, told reporters.

The festival will host seven world premieres and several regional firsts, including the Southeast Asian premiere of "The Phantom of the Opera," for which director Joel Schumacher and actor Gerard Butler, who plays the phantom, will be present.

Schumacher, who has directed more than 20 movies, including the 1980s classics, "St. Elmo's Fire" and "The Lost Boys," will receive a career achievement award due to be presented by actor Michael Douglas.

Irons will attend the screening of his film, "Being Julia," based on a novel by W. Somerset Maugham and set in 1930s London.

Weaver, star of the "Alien" movie trilogy, will be here to promote her new film, "Imaginary Heroes."

Presentation

Mexican cinematographer Rodrigo Prieto, who has worked on some 30 films including "Alexander," "21 Grams," "Frida" and "Amores Perros," will receive the Crystal Lens award, and Oliver Stone, who directed "Alexander," will be here to support the presentation of that award, Prater said.

The festival will kick off with a screening of Tom Hooper's "Red Dust," starring Academy Award-winner Hilary Swank as a prosecutor. The movie explores the effects of South Africa's post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which investigated atrocities and granted amnesty to those who fully confessed their crimes.

Artist David Hockney will be present for the screening of "David Hockney: The Colors of Music," a documentary about his production design work for operas. *AP*

WEBBER. Film adaptation of his popular musical, "The Phantom of the Opera," will be screened in Thailand.

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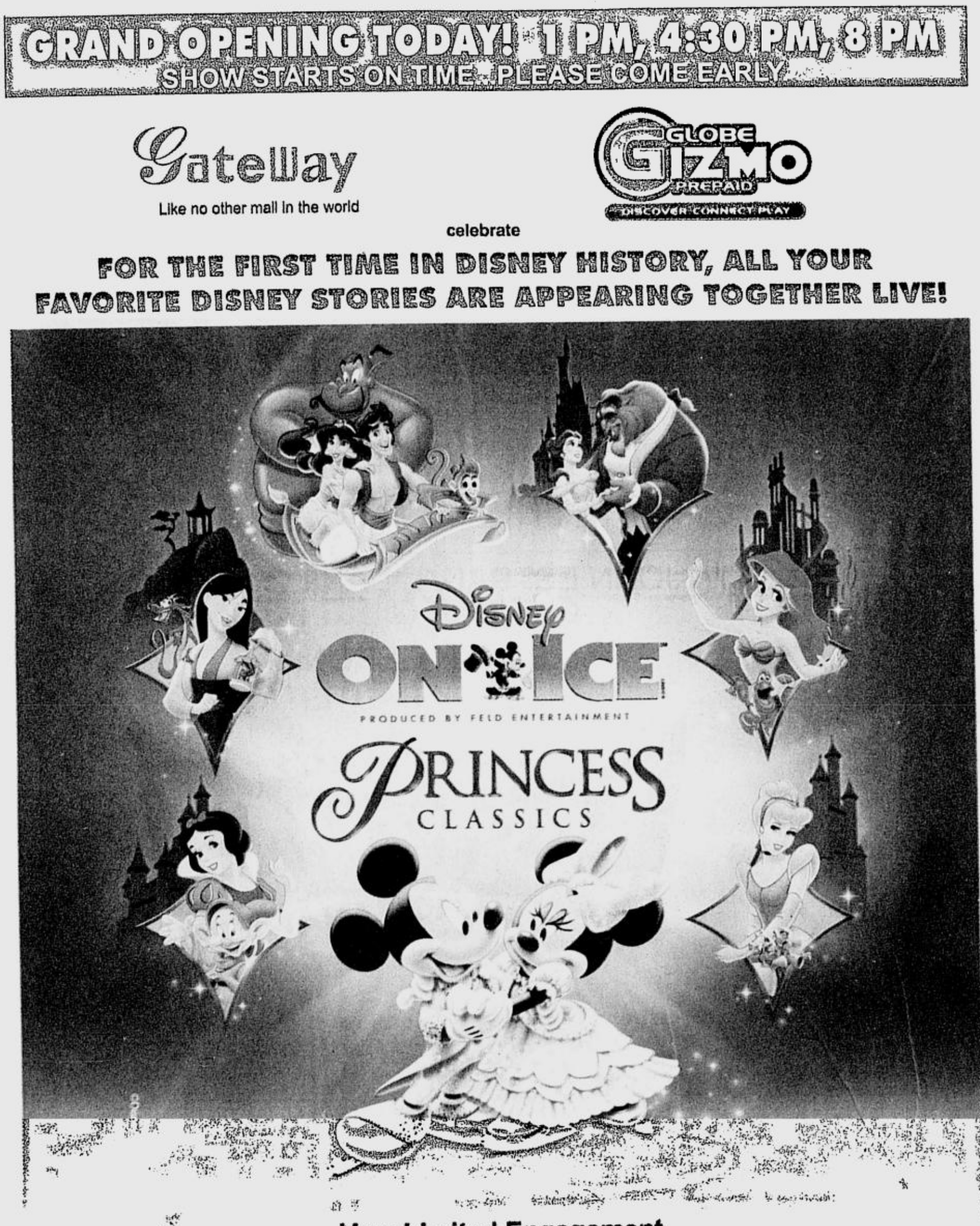

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Eve Ensler takes on the rest of the body

NEW YORK—Now that Eve Ensler's "Vagina Monologues" has traveled the globe, her stomach has a thing or two to add.

Ensler, the woman who transformed the vagina from a hushed "down there" into a marquee word that tumbles from the mouths of the highest-profile celebrities, has come to accept her private parts.

But, it was with some horror, she says, that she looked down at her "not-so-flat, post-40s stomach," and realized her self-hatred had simply crept upward.

Thus was born "The Good Body," Ensler's new play about her own navel-gazing, and the extreme efforts women make to shrink, starve, cover and fix their smallest imperfections. Her message? Learn to love your body, then get on with the bigger business of life.

Miracle

"I want women to be free," she says. "I want us to get up in the morning and go, 'Oh my God, I've got a body, what a miracle!'"

For her one-woman show on Broadway, Ensler interviewed hundreds of women on several continents, visited an American "fat camp," a Brazilian plastic surgery clinic, Weight Watchers meetings and gyms from Italy to India. Everywhere she went, she found women trying to fix themselves.

"There are few people who are not faced with this, particularly in this culture," she says. "Between the combination of Judeo-Christian religious 'be good, be good, be good' and capitalist 'something's wrong with you, buy this' and the parental upbringing, which is 'you're wrong, you're not thin enough, you're not smart enough . . .' I mean, hello! We don't have a shot!"

Sitting cross-legged in her dressing room at the Booth Theater and eating a tofu salad with chopsticks, Ensler's passion for her cause is clear. She waves her bangled arm for emphasis and frequently uses "hello!" as a verbal exclamation point.

Empowering women

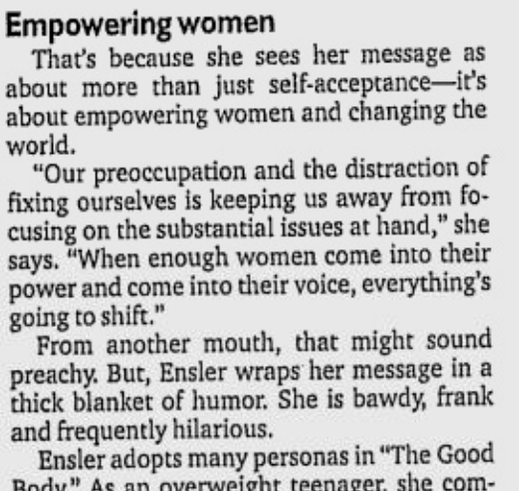
That's because she sees her message as about more than just self-acceptance—it's about empowering women and changing the world.

"Our preoccupation and the distraction of fixing ourselves is keeping us away from focusing on the substantial issues at hand," she says. "When enough women come into their power and come into their voice, everything's going to shift."

From another mouth, that might sound preachy. But, Ensler wraps her message in a thick blanket of humor. She is bawdy, frank and frequently hilarious.

Ensler adopts many personas in "The Good Body." As an overweight teenager, she complains that plus sizes are kept in the back "like porn." As a Botox-injected fortysomething, she cracks, "My face is numb, but I'm insane in here." As Cosmopolitan magazine editor

EVE/ A3-5



ENSLER. Her self-hatred had simply crept upward.

Willie Nepomuceno wants to be taken seriously

By Andy Bais

TO his followers, Willie Nepomuceno is a master comedian who shows them the funny albeit more human side of the popular and controversial figures he impersonates. Ironically, he does not really consider himself much of a comedian: "I am a serious man, and I'm serious even when I do my comedy," he declares.

Willie was thrust into show business by sheer force of circumstance. As a fine arts student at UP, he was an activist during the Marcos years. Before fiery speeches, he would entertain the crowd. "I'd perform protest jokes and songs before discussing issues. And, it was for free! I did it with passion," he recalls.

Popular figures

After imitating popular figures at the time, particularly the late President Marcos, he was hired as a broadcaster for ABS-CBN's Radyo Patrol, and was subsequently cast as part of the original "Super Laff-In" gang.

"*May nakakuhang* footage *ng* rallies that I performed in, *at napanood ako. E, walang bakante sa* 'Radyo Patrol,' *kaya pina*-audition *ako sa* Super Laff-In," he recalls. Later, he got his own radio show before crossing over to television.

He refers to his act as "impressions" rather than "impersonation." "Impersonation is simply copying something and usually, there's nothing beyond that. For me, that's corny! I'd like to think that I go beyond that— like 'painting' an impression of a scene, situation or character. What you see is not necessarily the person's character per se, but an impression of the character *na ginagaya ko*," he explains.

On and off

Willie's career has been on and off because he never liked show business. "But, I have to be a part of it, *kasi dito ko lang mae*-express *ang aking* art," he confides.

Unknown to many, the gifted comic is also a theater actor and a fine singer. "When I was younger, gusto ko talagang, maging actor or singer. *Kaya lang, uso noon ang mestiso at matangkad— hindi talaga ako papasa!* So, I thought of a strategy: *ginaya ko ang mga sikat,* and I got stuck doing that. *Hindi na ako makakanta* using my own voice!

NEPOMUCENO. "Impressions" rather than impersonation.

"*Nabuhayan ako ng loob* when I read the biography of Sammy Davis Jr. He wasn't recognized as a singer and actor until he performed on Broadway. In his concerts, impressions of popular actors and political figures were part of his act. I thought, *ganun din ang mangyayari sa akin.* Until now, *nanggagaya pa rin ako,*" he sighs.

From doing vocal impressions, Willie expanded his acts by dressing up like the popular figures he impersonates. His impression of Marcos, particularly, created quite a stir: "In one of my shows, the First Family came unannounced. *Nawala talaga ang* poise *ng dalawa—sa katatawa!,*" he says.

Picture

Marcos even had his picture taken with Willie. "He kidded me *na siguro,* frustrated Marcos *ako.*

When Marcos died, Willie thought of other celebrities to mimic: he is equally impressive as former Presidents Estrada and Ramos. But he never did a Cory Aquino or GMA impression.

"*Babae kasi sila,* unless I'm in full prosthetics, which would be very expensive. I draw the line: *Luluhod ba ako para magmukhang pandak? Ayokong pinapatawa ang tao* for their physical liabilities. Green jokes are a no-no. Besides, I can't deliver them well. I can only go so far. *Hindi ko teritoryo yun,*" he explains.

Central character

The late FPJ was a central character in his hit show, 'Willie Nep for President.' But, when FPJ lost in his presidential bid, Willie vowed not to do an impression on him again.

Is Willie expensive? he explains: *'Akala lang nila yun. 'Di nila alam, mahal ko ang trabaho ko.* There are people who see me as a novelty act. *Pupwede ako sa piyesta at perya—mura lang yun! Sana,* they think of the effort I put in, *yung gastos sa* costumes, props and wigs. *Nauubos ang kilay ko sa kadidikit ng* fake brows!"

Susan Roces: The face still refreshes

From page A3-1

never ceased to wonder why, as we chomped with gusto on their "*pabaon*" through niece Sheryll Cruz and Poe household institution, Aling Doray.

Punctuality

Susan's professionalism was marked by punctuality on the set. She would not only come on time, but would also arrive already completely made-up, with lines memorized and "ready for take."

Never "*kulang sa pansin,*" Susan would always wait for her cues in some unobtrusive corner, preparing for the next scene, listening attentively to endless conversation from costars, meditating, or . . . eating!

She confesses to an ongoing struggle with will power over sans rival and chocolate cake, only to lose the battle half the time.

Between Ronnie and Susan, the former gave his wife greater credit for business and administrative prowess. For the longest time, Susan ran the FPJ and Rosas Productions' management and booking front. Ronnie took to the creative and technical chores.

As a young star, Susan showed foresight by investing her earnings in real estate and business ventures. Susan bought a sizeable lot on Wilson St., Greenhills in the early sixties. She built a home for her family in what was to later emerge as a high-end subdivision traversing Mandaluyong and San Juan.

As Wilson became busier, she converted the house façade into a well patronized fruit and delicacy store. The site is presently occupied by a multistory building which the couple constructed and now leases as business offices.

Loyal friend

Like Ronnie, Susan is known to be a loyal friend, one who quietly reaches out to help. She always expresses interest in problems and how to solve them. Nevertheless, she hesitates to render unsolicited advice, even to closest friends.

When Susan visited Washington in 1993, our last year there, she made it a point to pay us a visit and even accompanied us to functions.

What I most appreciated was the patience and courage with which she withstood my "hazardous" driving on several occasions. Then, I knew, she was a woman of steel!

My husband Pete, like Ronnie a stroke victim, has found a staunch supporter in her, to my chagrin: Everytime I complain to Susan that Pete still smokes two packs a day, she turns to me and says: *pabayaan mo na siya, iyan na lang ang kaligayahan niya.*

The recent campaign showed the all-weather and strike-anywhere nature of Susan. The *palengke* tours said it all. Especially when she would lead us atop garbage disposal bins in the absence of platforms and do a Plaza Miranda.

Ever the wife and homeowner, she would make even the most unlikely stops in busy streets if she saw items that she thought would catch Ronnie's fancy.

And, of course, food! The *tinderas of kakanin* and fruits never had it so good in sales everytime Susan would scour the sidewalks.

In the campaign, Susan showed the same stamina, sell-possession and fortitude that were recently reprised.

Sensitivity

Not to mention the intense sensitivity to both the nature and needs of people. She could spot a fake a mile away, but would listen civilly to what he had to say. Tell him off, she would, but always in a non-confrontational and forthright manner.

These are complemented and balanced by Susan's funny bone. Perhaps a mark of optimism as well is Susan's admirable skill at self-deprecation. England's Prince Charles calls it the mark of true nobility—this ability to laugh at oneself.

In one of our more serious conversations about the country's future and her and Ronnie's, should he have won the elections, Susan adroitly diverted from hard issues and serious talk. When asked what her and Ronnie's greatest concerns were about living in Malacañang, her unabashed answer was: "Would I still be allowed to wear my old loose dusters, and can Ronnie still sleep in his Mickey Mouse and Tweety Bird undershirts?"

TRIVIAL PURSUITS

Clive Owen reprises West End role on the big screen in 'Closer'

By Rito P. Asilo

DO you have questions about show biz you want answered, or fun facts and little-known trivia about your favorite celebrities you want to share with fellow show biz buffs? Get in touch with us at rasilo@inquirer.com.ph.

Onstage and onscreen

Who among the four leading actors in Mike Nichols' film adaptation of Patrick Marber's acclaimed play, "Closer," was in the original West End cast?

Clive Owen ("King Arthur") played Dan in the original London run of "Closer." To date, the film version directed by Mike Nichols has already won an award from the National Board of Review for the best performance by an ensemble (Julia Roberts, Jude Law, Natalie Portman and Owen).

The play, about the sexual politics between two couples, is so popular that it still runs at London's Radlett Center.

Name Game

Matt Damon has starred in seven films with titles that included his characters' names in them. What were these movies and his names in them?

ROBERTS AND OWEN. Their performances in Mike Nichols' film were cited by the National Board of Review.

"Good Will Hunting" (1997) as Will Hunting; "Saving Private Ryan" (1998) as Private Ryan; "The Talented Mr. Ripley" (1999) as Tom Ripley; "Gerry" (2002); "The Bourne Identity" (2002) and "The Bourne Supremacy" (2004) as Jason Bourne, and "Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron." In the upcoming "The Brothers Grimm," Damon will play Will Grimm.

CD breakthrough

What was the very first CD pressed in the US?

Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the USA."

Gorgeous vagrants

Which actors were recently barred from entering a hotel in Europe after they were mistaken as vagrants?

While discussing production logistics for Steven Soderbergh's "Ocean's 12" in Italy, George Clooney and Brad Pitt got caught in a rainstorm during a morning jog in Rome.

Not recognizing the two Hollywood heartthrobs, who are both former recipients of People magazine's Sexiest Man Alive award (with Pitt "winning" the title twice), the doorman thought that the soaked and soggy men were vagrants, and barred them from entering the hotel, where they were billeted! The clueless hotel employee soon learned the error of his ways and hastily apologized to the amused—and very wet—actors.

Classy male

Who was the first male celebrity to appear on the cover of Vogue magazine?

Richard Gere. He was later followed by George Clooney.

A heartthrob's fears

What are Justin Timberlake's three greatest fears?

Justin is afraid of spiders and snakes, and of dying unloved. And he's scared that he'll fall unconscious at a concert if he gets hit by the stuffed animals that fans throw to him onstage. Ouch!

GERE. First actor on the cover of Vogue.

PITT AND CLOONEY. Barred from hotel.

Reindeer names

What do "Donner" and "Blitzen" stand for?

The reindeer's names stand for "thunder" and "lightning," respectively.

Muppets' nomenclature

How did "Sesame Street's" Bert and Ernie get their names?

Bert and Ernie were named after characters from Frank Capra's "It's a Wonderful Life": Officer Bert was a policeman, and Ernie Bishop was a taxi driver in the 1946 film classic.

TIMBERLAKE. Scared of spiders and snakes.

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

Scorsese's 'The Aviator' labor of love for DiCaprio

LONDON—Leonardo DiCaprio has never worked so hard on a movie, and doesn't mind admitting that an Oscar nomination for his portrayal of American billionaire Howard Hughes in "The Aviator" would be welcome.

In London to promote the Martin Scorsese-directed biopic, the 30-year-old described how he had read dozens of books and even spent time with a mentally ill man before taking on the role of Hughes, who was increasingly crippled by phobias.

DICAPRIO. Read dozens of books for his role as Howard Hughes.

Most extensive

"Certainly, it's the most extensive research I've ever done," DiCaprio said in an interview with Reuters.

"You do as much work and research as you can, and when portraying somebody that actually did live, you have to be really specific about what you want to convey.

"For an example, the neurosis. I spent a few days with a man who had an OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder) and learned his rituals, superstitions and the mind games that he had to play with himself 24 hours a day just to keep sane."

"The Aviator" covers Hughes' life from the 1920s to the 1940s, a turbulent time when he was everything from maverick filmmaker to daredevil aviator to a playboy who had affairs with Hollywood legends including Katharine Hepburn and Ava Gardner.

It also alludes to his latter years living as an unkempt recluse terrified of germs. When he died in 1976, Hughes had become so unrecognizable that the medical examiner was forced to take his fingerprints to confirm the body was his.

DiCaprio met people who knew Hughes, an ex-wife, actresses who worked with him and also spoke to doctors about his mental condition.

"It was eight years in the making, 15 drafts of the script ultimately," he said.

DiCaprio's performance is widely expected to win him an Oscar nomination at the least. Scorsese could also be in the running for his first Academy Award and the film itself is being tipped as a front runner.

Golden era

"The Aviator," which cost an estimated $100 million and recreates Hollywood's golden era of the 1930s and 1940s, has already received six Golden Globe nominations, second only to "Sideways," a romantic comedy.

DiCaprio has never won an Oscar, but is one of the film industry's biggest names. He starred in "Titanic," the all-time top-earning film in most countries.

When asked about his Oscar chances, DiCaprio replied: "I'm just talking about a nomination. I'm just being honest in saying that anyone who says they wouldn't want to be nominated is full of you-know-what." But, the film's chances for the top honors were as important as his own, he added.

Great feeling

"Overall, that we've been recognized like that is a great feeling. How could it not be?"

Collaborating with Scorsese is becoming something of a habit for the heartthrob.

The two worked together on "Gangs of New York" and are due to start shooting "The Departed", based on a Hong Kong gangster flick.

"We both share a need to make things as authentic as we possibly can, and we're constantly fighting for that. Maybe, there's a partnership there for the two of us."

Reuters

Eve Ensler takes on the rest of the body

From page A3-5

Helen Gurley Brown, she brags, "I'm down to 90 pounds. Another 10 years, I'll be down to nothing."

"There's a strong political and social theme running through this play, but what's nice about it is, it's also very funny," says director Peter Askin.

Ensler credits Askin with helping her transform her performance. For "The Vagina Monologues," she simply read from a stool. In "The Good Body," she does dozens of sit-ups, dashes across the stage and even throws in some dance numbers.

Musical

"We initially thought, 'Well, maybe I'll get off the stool,'" she says. "I feel like it's a musical now."

Ensler, 51, smiles often and laughs easily. As an activist for nearly 30 years, she has discovered that hitting people over the head with a message usually turns them off. "Humor often works. It seems to get people in a different way."

Her cause remains a serious one: Ending violence against women. Ensler was raped and abused by her father as a child and spent years struggling with drug addiction and self-destruction.

Early years

"Most of my early years were about just trying to not do myself in," she says. "So, I used to have this deal that if I get through this, I'll help other people."

Writing helped her turn a corner in her life, and eventually started a global phenomenon. "The Vagina Monologues," which started off-Broadway a decade ago, has been translated into 35 languages and been performed by such stars as Glenn Close, Oprah Winfrey and Winona Ryder.

AP

CRUZ AND SARANDON. Co-star in the indie, "Noel."

Self-destructing DVDS to reach wider audience

LOS ANGELES—The Christmas-themed movie, "Noel," most likely won't be coming to a theater near you—but if you miss it on cable, there's always the self-destructing DVD.

The movie's producers hope that its "trimultaneous" roll out this month, which started last weekend with a theater release in five major cities in the United States, will prove that the public is willing to "rent" movies that must be tossed in the trash after a viewing or two.

Disposable DVDs look and play like normal DVDs, except that their playable surface is dark red.

Chemical time-bomb

Each disc contains a chemical time-bomb that begins ticking once it's exposed to air. Typically, after 48 hours, the disc turns darker, becoming so opaque that a DVD player's laser can no longer read it. (Discs can live as little as one hour or as long as 60 hours.)

The format has been around for a few years, but it hasn't generated much interest from movie studios, video rental companies—or customers—despite experiments to deliver movies direct to consumers and eliminate late fees.

Enter "Noel," an emotional Christmas story starring Susan Sarandon, Penelope Cruz and Robin Williams. The independent film was shown at this year's Toronto Film Festival, but didn't attract interest from mainstream distribution companies.

So, the Atlanta-based Convex Group bought distribution rights and is releasing the film on a few dozen screens.

Then, the movie will be available in the disposable EZ-D format for $4.99 (euro3.85) on Amazon.com. On cable, it will air once, on TNT, during Thanksgiving weekend.

Exclusive rights

Convex owns more than 100 media patents and holds exclusive distribution rights to CD-ROMS that fit into the lids of soft drink cups.

The technology's backers see it as an alternative for video rental stores and Netflix-type mail-based subscription services.

After the movie is watched, the consumer tosses it into the trash, eliminating late fees and the cost of return mail—but creating a potentially large, new source of trash.

The potential to add to landfills may be the least of reasons

SELF-DESTRUCTING/ A3-7

Pops Fernandez, Jed Madela opt for revivals

By Rito P. Asilo

DESPITE the setback brought about by the problem of piracy, the local recording industry continues to churn out new releases from top and promising recording artists.

But, in the last five years, we have noticed changes in trends and tastes that are curiously geared toward independent, alternative sound and, for most pop-oriented singers, cover versions of standards and contemporary ballads.

Jed Madela may be not be a very familiar face, although we believe he should be. His second album, "Songs Rediscovered," is a hefty, 17-track showcase of this vocal dynamo and an awesome demonstration of the young singer's technique.

Familiar song

Yes, it can get tiring to listen to the album's very familiar songs after some spins in your CD player. For example, a number of local recording artists have their own versions of Keith Martin's tedious but radio-friendly "Because of You," Mark Sherman's soaring but unapologetically sappy "Changes in My Life," the overused "More Than You'll Ever Know," or Survivor's vocally demanding "The Search Is Over."

But, it's a testament to any singer's ability to give an old, schmaltzy ballad a different emotional twist through sheer vocal technique—and Jed has a lot of this to share!

FERNANDEZ. Has become comfortable with the limitations of her voice.

But, power isn't just volume, and the singer knows his way around his musical notes. He doesn't just shout to amaze, although he can easily do so if he wishes.

In his show-stopping version of "Home" (from the musical, "The Wiz"), he proves that the lower register of his voice is just as stable as his belting ability.

In "Time Will Reveal," his enviable falsetto is strong and seamless. In "Only Reminds Me of You" and "Right Next to Me," his vocal shifts are smooth and exquisite.

Among the songs, Fra Lippo Lippi's "Beauty and Madness" and Ray Parker Jr.'s "The Past" stand out because, while these tunes don't require as much bravura singing as say Rick Price's "Heaven Knows," these are the perfect tunes to showcase the performer's mid-range vocal stability.

Other tracks included in the album are Elton John's "Your Song," The Williams Brothers' "Can't Cry Hard Enough," Kenny Lerum's "For You," and Cynthia Weil's "Love Always Finds A Way."

Identity

Unfortunately, despite the quantity of the tracks in the collection, singing covers doesn't really help Jed create his unique, musical identity, since his repertoire is limited to songs that have been popularized by other singers.

Singing remakes is fine, but how do you create your style and strengthen your image if you are limited to singing rehashed tunes?

Performing original songs is how singers earn their stripes—because that's how you create identity, and not just copy or improve on a version that's already been covered *ad nauseum*.

Take Pops Fernandez, for example. Her 10-track album, "When Words Are Not Enough," contains mostly remakes of popular songs like Lauren Wood's "Fallen" (from "Pretty Woman"), although Pops manages to tweak the obvious sentimentality of the song, and make the ditty a sweet, gushing ode to falling in love.

MADELA. Power isn't just volume.

We are no big Pops Fernandez fans, but her latest CD is her best album in years. And this is simply because she has become comfortable with the limitations of her voice—which consequently becomes the album's asset.

The occasional off-key moments are still there, especially noticeable in the Filipino songs ("Hahanapin Mo Ba Ako?," "Higit sa Lahat, Mahal Mo Ba Ako?"), but these "sins" have been mostly dealt with in the album, and are thus forgivable.

Pops smartly sings songs that fall within her range, so the singing sounds comfortable and unforced.

It's when she pushes her range that she gets into trouble (as she does in "Misty").

The arrangements are light, innovative and well-produced ("Light of My Life," "Crying Over You").

Carrier track

Our personal pick is the carrier track, Rex Smith's "You Take My Breath Away," whose arrangement perfectly captures Pops' alto, and she delivers it with "informed" panache.

It's not everyday that we surprise ourselves by buying albums that pleasantly go beyond our expectations, so we're glad that Fernandez's latest compilation does just that.

Surviving the fiscal crisis in the recording industry

By Remy Umerez

ACCORDING to the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), there has been a minimal decline worldwide in the state of music and recording. Consequently, the local industry has also suffered the same fate, but the overall scenario is not as gloomy as the dismal local film industry.

Biggest problem

PARI president Antonio Ocampo points out to piracy as the biggest problem the music industry has to hurdle:

MONTERO. Debut album.

OCAMPO. Solving piracy is a Herculean task.

"It is a Herculean task, solving a problem that is almost impossible to eradicate. But the creation of the Optical Media Board (formerly Videogram Regulatory Board) is a big help in our campaign against piracy," he observes.

Ocampo is also the president of Ivory Music Video. He reveals that the market is predominantly made up of students who prefer to spend their allowance on cell phone loads than on cassettes and CDs.

Despite the trying times, Ivory has survived the crisis. The company has earned the trust and support of the record-buying public, and is now ready to diversify.

He observes that the company's performance in 2004 is better than last year. As Ivory invades the video market, it is modifying its name. Some 50 movie titles produced by OctoArts are exclusively released by Ivory, among them the blockbuster movies, "Fantastikman" and "Malikmata."

Brisk sales

Brisk sales depend on how good and efficient the distribution network is. BMG products are being distributed by Ivory in key cities in the Visayas and Mindanao. Other labels they handle are Praise (gospel songs), the British jazz label Candid, and Tao, the outfit that produces the albums of Grace Nono.

Albums

Ivory also distributes the albums of concert pianist Raul Sunico, Jeni Hernandez, Eight of March, Jay and Bev, and Maricar de Mesa.

The outfit enjoyed a robust year with a number of albums reaching the gold and platinum marks. MYMP (Make Your Momma Proud) has reached platinum (30,000 units sold).

"Star in A Million" champ Erik Santos is gold-bound with his latest album, "Iniwan."

And Ocampo is optimistic about the release of Troy Montero's debut album, "Special Memory," which contains 12 tracks.

From the nation's No. 1 Newspaper:
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Young Christmas Stars bring hope and cheer

By Nestor U. Torre

OUR Christmas Stars this week are youthful entertainers who are outstanding in their own right, despite their relatively tender years. Thus, they provide a different kind of inspiration in terms of a hopeful future for the local entertainment industry, which has had more than its usual annual quota of woes this year.

Let's start off with **Billy Crawford**, the Fil-Am singer who's now a star in Europe. Billy has topped popularity tilts over some rather big names in the field of popular music, but the good news is, he hasn't allowed his success to go to his head.

Unassuming ways

On home leave in Manila recently, Billy impressed his local fans with his unassuming ways. But, when he performed, they saw how professional he had become, and why he's made it so big in Europe.

In the movies, Billy was able to clinch a starring role in the much-awaited prequel to "The Exorcist," but his version was deemed not bloody enough by its producers, so it's been released only on video.

For most other young comers, this disappointing turn of events would have been cause for them to grievously doubt their talent, but Billy is made of sterner stuff. Instead of letting the sad denouement derail his career, he's simply charged it to experience, and moved on.

CRAWFORD. Success hasn't gone to his head.

TRILLO. Astute characterization in "Aishite Masu."

With his determination and never-say-die attitude, Billy Crawford's star is sure to rise to greater heights in entertainment seasons to come.

Bigger and better things

Our second youthful Christmas Star is **Rayver Cruz**. He's still in his mid-teens, but the new star of the "Spirits" TV series is clearly made for bigger and better things in entertainment.

We first noticed him when we saw him dancing months ago on TV. There were other male starlets doing the same steps with him, but Rayver stood out because he simply danced better and more enthusiastically than his peers.

Even more impressively, he didn't just do the choreographed steps correctly, he made them his own with his sense of enjoyment and interpretive skills. Those are some of the hallmarks of stardom, so Rayver has "it."

Now that Chito Roño has tapped him to play the leader of the young team of superheroes in "Spirits," Rayver is truly coming into his own. He should be impressing even more people next year.

Another young performer who's standing out in show biz's madding crowd of eager-beaver aspirants is **Dennis Trillo**. His big break is in the MMFF film, "Aishite Masu," where he plays a beautiful, cross-dressing gay.

Gay character

Now, portraying a gay character isn't the usual route to stardom for a male comer, but Dennis characterization is so astute that what comes through is his thespic talent, not his skill at swishing.

So, the unusual role should enable Dennis to reap even more unusually profitable dividends as an actor, and won't typecast him in transvestite parts. Wonderful prospects all around, especially for the obviously talented and perceptive Dennis Trillo. *(To be concluded)*

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Side A anthology is hefty and comprehensive

By Noelani Torre

WE literally grew up with Side A. They were singing "Hold On" when we were in grade school, "Forevermore" in high school, and "Will I Ever" in college. They were *the* live band 10 years before the acoustic craze even began, and they remain the yardstick against which other bands are measured.

It's not surprising then that they didn't have a problem coming up with "signature" tunes to include in their most recent release, "Side A Anthology." The two-disc collection is packed with 38 of them, including covers and duets with Sharon Cuneta ("All This Time") and Zsa Zsa Padilla ("Think It Over").

POPULAR quintet's double disc compilation traces the band's development.

Earliest hit

"Anthology" traces the band's development from its earliest hit, "Eva Marie," to "So Many Questions," "Forevermore," and their covers of other well-loved songs (like Joey Albert's "Tell Me").

Formed in 1985, Side A has had an unending string of hits for almost two decades now, and "Anthology" is their 12th album. According to the band's PR, it "achieved Gold record status during the first few days of its release." The band and its producers are anxious to counteract the negative effect that piracy has been having on sales.

The price-lowering of their anthology has also resulted in a bare bones inlay, no CD art whatsoever—and as for songs' lyrics for the diehards who just have to sing along, forget about it.

38 songs

Still, the music remains great despite the absence of the usual CD frills we've come to expect—and 38 songs is a lot of music!

The tracks are culled from the group's 1989's self-titled debut (Ivory), 1991's "White Album" (Vicor), 1993's "Blue Album" (Vicor), 1994's "By Your Side" (Warner), 1995's "Forevermore," 1996's "Side A Live! The 10th Anniversary Concert," 1997's "Side A Yr. 12," 1998's "Ang Ating Awitin," 2000's "Will I Ever," 2001's "The Platinum Collection," and 2002's "Side A Acoustic Love Songs Collection." Eighteen songs produced during the first half of their career are in the first disc, and 20 from the second half are in the second CD.

Instruments

If you've noticed, however, the band hasn't produced an album that wasn't a collection for almost five years now. Not that *that's* a bad thing per se, but bands usually start coming out with strings of "greatest hits," "acoustic versions" or "anthologies" when they're going through a creative dry spot or are thinking of hanging up their instruments.

We certainly hope that's not the case here. Side A has been with us for what seems like forever, and it would be a shame to see them out of the scene.

Still, it would be nice to hear some new stuff—maturity's bound to have effected changes in their music.

Meanwhile, fans can console themselves with this juicy compilation of songs that have made Side A what they are today.

International Month celebrations

(Conclusion)

STREET SMART

Mandy Navasero

ON the first day of December, the Esteban International School Choir sang Christmas carols at the lobby of the Dusit Hotel to the delight of the audience composed of parents and relatives.

The Esteban International School, founded by Eleanor Powell-Esteban, began in 1964 with only 12 pupils.

Learning is fun

Mrs. Esteban believes that love or aversion for learning is acquired during primary school age. At Esteban, learning is fun.

Children are naturally curious: They want to know how things work, why the sky is blue and how the sun comes up. Their questions never end. But, their natural curiosity sets the tone for a lifetime of learning.

Today, Esteban International School is a progressive institution with a very low teacher-student ratio of 1:3.

For parents looking for a school that keeps its students abreast in this information age, call 843-5065 for preschool and 844-9913 for grade school.

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Self-destructing DVDS to reach wider audience

From page A3-5

disposable DVDs have so far been a dud.

The discs can be illegally copied and pirated, just like regular DVDs. And, while they are made of recyclable plastic, consumers would have to mail them to a special center for processing.

Subscription

Blockbuster Inc. hasn't embraced disposable DVDs because it says it does not want to confuse its customers. Instead, the company has adopted a Netflix-like subscription approach to video rentals.

"We don't see the idea going anywhere, ultimately," Blockbuster spokesman Randy Hargrove said of disposable DVDs.

That's bad news for Convex, which bought Flexplay last month. Flexplay had provided discs to The Walt Disney Co., which has experimented with the format for the past year in eight test markets.

Disney has released a number of films on the discs, including "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl" and "Bridget Jones' Diary."

Convenience stores

The movies are sold in unconventional outlets, such as convenience stores, and are generally made available weeks after they first appear on DVD.

For films with less backing, disposable DVDs may be an option.

"Noel" director Chazz Palminteri hopes Convex's unique marketing approach will generate a buzz, calling it "the only way you can compete with the Christmas movies that have $30 million budgets."

While the novelty of a fading DVD may attract some buyers, Convex chief executive Jeff Arnold said it won't take off without studios releasing films in the format. "People aren't enamored of technology. They are enamored of content," he said.

Opposition

But, Convex ran into a wall of opposition from major theater chains, none of which wanted to show a movie that would appear on television *and* be sold on DVD at the same time.

The average studio release is in theaters for five months before it is released on DVD, according to the National Association of Theater Owners.

So, Convex started showing "Noel" at smaller theaters in Los Angeles, New York, Miami, Atlanta and Chicago.

Alternative routes

Studios haven't given up trying alternative routes to get DVDs into the hands of consumers more quickly.

Some studios release DVDs, even of hit blockbuster films, after less than four months in theaters. Five studios operate an Internet-based service called "Movielink," which lets consumers download films, usually after they have appeared in video rental stores. *AP*

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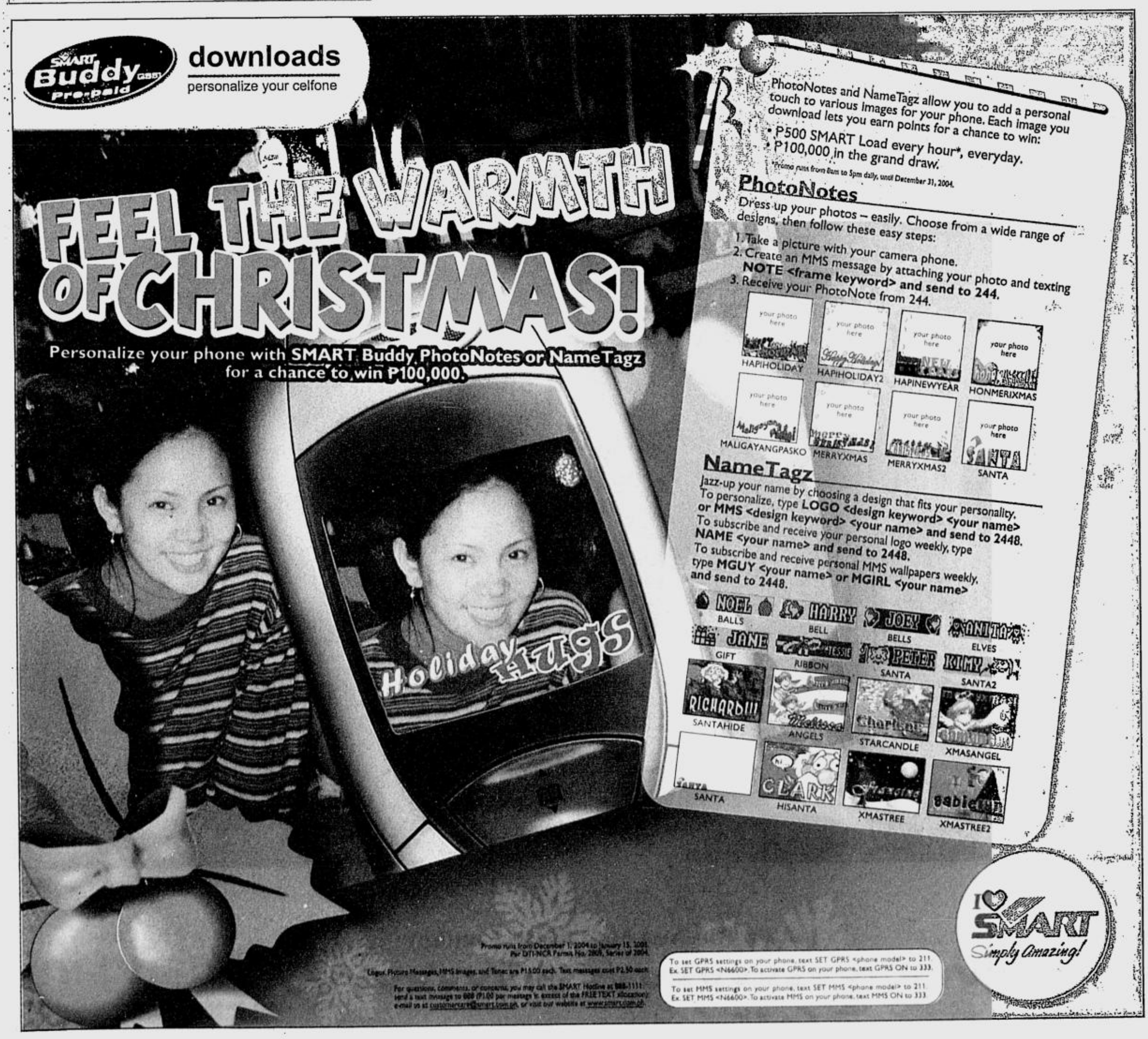

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SATURDAY *Special*

GARLAND. First sang "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas."

Stories behind classic Christmas carols

SHOW BIZ Q & A

Rito P. Asilo

FROM Grace Guingab of Isabela: "I love listening to Christmas carols, but my favorites are 'Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas' and 'White Christmas.' Who sang their original versions?"

Grace, your favorite Christmas carol, composed by Hugh Martin and Ralph Blane ("The Trolley Song"), was first sung by Judy Garland ("The Wizard of Oz") in the 1944 Vincenti Minnelli classic, "Meet Me in St. Louis."

When Garland turned 21, she refused to make movies that featured her as a teenager. She would send her mother to MGM studios to refuse on her behalf, but upon the persistence of then new director Minnelli, Garland agreed to do the film and, in the process, fell in love with the director, whom she married soon after the movie was shown. The couple's only child is Oscar and Tony winner Liza Minnelli ("Cabaret").

Musical

"White Christmas" was taken from the 1954 movie musical of the same title, which starred Bing Crosby and Rosemarie Clooney. (Its composer, Irving Berlin, was responsible for one of the very first songs sung in motion pictures—a ballad called "Blue Skies.")

Berlin wrote the music and lyrics with the help of a transcriber—because he couldn't write musical notations, a unique situation for a legendary songwriter with 1,500 songs to his name!

On the other hand, it's interesting to note that "Jingle Bells," a song that is practically synonymous with Christmas, was not really written as a Christmas carol.

James Pierpoint, a church minister, wrote the song (originally called "The One-Horse Open Sleigh") in 1857 for a Thanksgiving program—not Christmas!—for the Boston church where he taught Sunday school. Pierpoint made the rhythm so jaunty and the words so catchy that his 40 little Sunday schoolers learned it almost instantaneously.

First performance

Admiring the song, a friend of Pierpoint called it a "merry little jingle," and gave the tune the title by which we know it today. The children's first performance was such a success that they were asked to repeat it at Christmastime, whereupon the sleigh took on the identity of Santa's sled, and "Jingle Bells" became a timeless Yuletide ditty.

"Silver Bells" was from the 1951 Bob Hope starrer, "The Lemon Drop Kid," a gangster movie set during the holidays. The song became so popular that they released two separate singles in the same season: The movie version was sung by Bob Hope and Marilyn Maxwell, and the pop version by Bing Crosby and Carol Richard. (Unfortunately, the movie was deemed so bad it was banned in Finland!)

In 1990, almost 40 years after its release, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) gave the holiday tune an award for being the "most performed feature-film standard song."

"O Come, All Ye Faithful" and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing!" were the only Christmas songs used in Frank Capra's ultimate holiday movie, "It's A Wonderful Life" (1946). Ironically, however, before the film classic became annual holiday TV fare, it was among James Stewart's lowest-grossing movies.

"Santa Claus is Coming to Town" was written (with lyricist Haven Gillespie) for composer John Fredrick Coots' rowdy, little nephews. In 1914, Coots was a Wall Street banker who shifted careers after seeing a professional music "plugger" selling new songs in a music shop. (The duo's second collaboration, "You Go to My Head," is a torch song classic more recently associated with Linda Ronstadt.)

Merry Christmas, everyone!

STEWART. Starred in Frank Capra's ultimate holiday movie.

'Shrek 3' release delayed

LOS ANGELES—Dreamworks Studios said recently it had delayed the release of its highly anticipated animated movie, "Shrek 3," by six months as Hollywood frantically reshuffles its cartoon debuts.

Dreamworks said that the third instalment of the adventures of the giant green ogre, "Shrek," would be pushed back until May 2007 from late 2006.

The move came a day after Oscar-winning rivals Pixar Animation Studios and Walt Disney announced they would delay the debut of their last collaboration, "Cars," until June 2006 from November 2005.

Dreamworks chief executive Jeffrey Katzenberg said the change in "Shrek's" next planned sortie had been prompted by Disney-Pixar's announcement.

Better returns

"The sheer magnitude of the Shrek franchise has led us to conclude that a May release date, with a DVD release around the holiday season, will enable us to best maximize performance and increase profitability, thereby generating enhanced asset value and better returns for our shareholders," DreamWorks Animation chief Jeffrey Katzenberg said in a statement.

Both Dreamworks and Disney-Pixar hope their new early summer debuts will allow them to cash in on both the large summer audience and the holiday DVD market that follows.

The first two "Shrek" movies were released in early May of 2001 and 2004 respectively and went on to a combined domestic gross of more than $708 million. *AFP*

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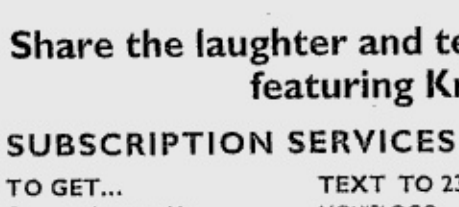

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INNER CIRCLE. Biggest act in its niche.

Party reggae collection with a touch of soul

By Noelani Torre

IN 1968, brothers Ian and Roger Lewis founded reggae group Inner Circle along with Steven "Cat" Coore, Michael "Ibo" Cooper, and Richard Daley.

Changes

Now, 36 years later, they've gone through several member changes and dry spots, but have also bagged a Grammy, mounted numerous world tours, and spawned a number of international hits—enough to allow them to release a "best of" collection.

If their name doesn't ring a bell, maybe some of their hits will—particularly "Bad Boys," well known for being the theme song of Fox's "Cops," and the inspiration for the titles of two Will Smith and Martin Lawrence starrers—"Bad Boys" and "Bad Boys 2," and "Sweat (A La La La La Long)," a naughty, highly groovesome tune that first shocked our sensibilities a few years back.

"Danceable" is an adjective that could describe a great deal of the music of Inner Circle. A fusion of pop, rock, and reggae, it has proven to be a worldwide favorite, as can be attested to by the success of their world tours.

Out of the group's original lineup, only the Lewis brothers (Ian on bass and Roger on guitar) have remained.

The other members of today's quintet are Touter Harvey on keyboards, Lancelot Hall on drums, and vocalist Kris Bentley. Bentley is a relative newcomer, having replaced Carlton Coffie in 1997 (when the latter decided to pursue a solo career). Coffie had, in turn, replaced Inner Circle's charismatic former vocalist, Jacob Miller, who died in a car crash in 1980.

Solo artist

Miller had already been enjoying success as a solo artist before he joined the group. His Rastafarian spirituality greatly influenced the band's sound, resulting in songs with more social conscience in them. He authored such socially progressive hits as "Forward Jah Jah Children," "Tired Fe Lick Weed in a Bush," "All Night Till Daylight," and "Tenement Yard."

His death greatly affected the others, resulting in Inner Circle's disbanding and Harvey and Ian Lewis' moving to Miami.

The move eventually proved to be fruitful, however, especially when Roger appeared on the scene, and the trio decided to revive the band with Coffie and Hall as replacements.

Exposure

The loss of Miller's influence and the band's exposure to mid-80s dance music caused another change in the Inner Circle sound. The pop influence became more apparent, and traces of R&B were also detectable.

This is the musical strain featured in the hits collection, "The Best of Inner Circle (Sweat A La La La La Long)," released earlier this year.

Playlist

Included in the 20-track playlist are two versions of "Sweat," other hits like "Bad Boys" and "Bad to the Bone," and covers like "Ob-la-di, Ob-la-da" and "Book of Rules." There are no Miller-penned numbers here, a testament to the fact that the group has long been over that particular phase.

The songs here are classic party reggae with a touch of soul. Inner Circle is, in fact, the biggest act in this particular crossover niche. And a listen to the laid-back yet thumping tracks in this collection will tell you why.

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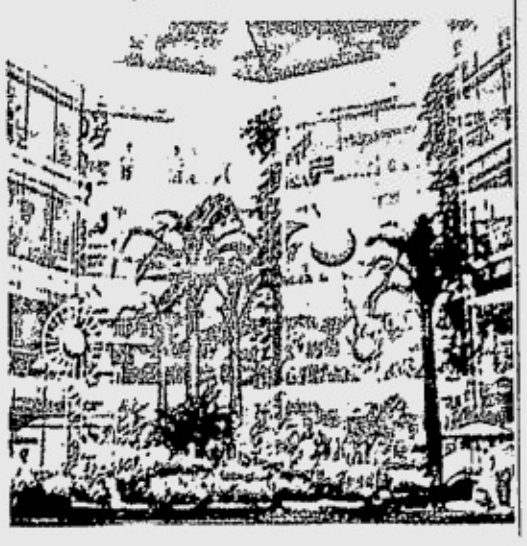

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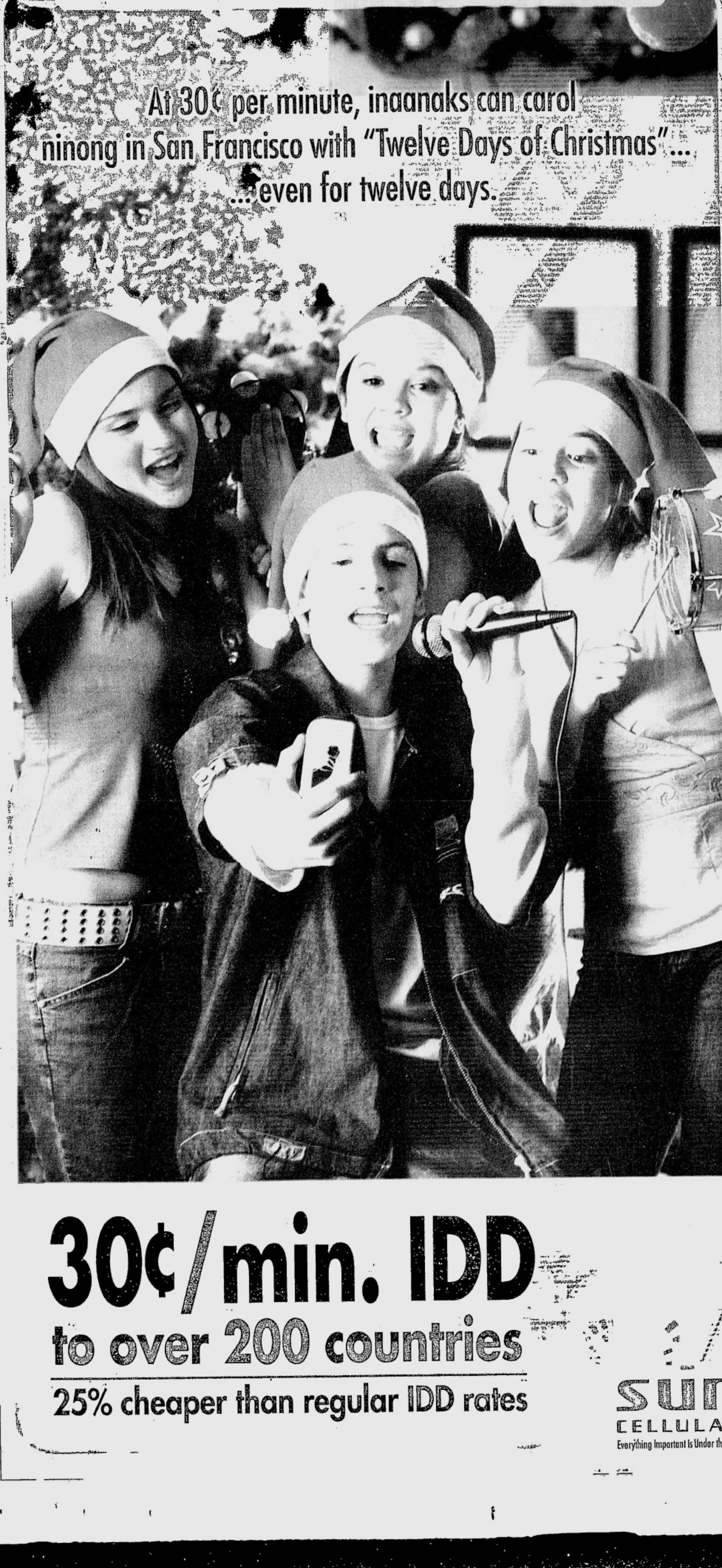

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'Spider-Man 2,' 'The Aviator' among AFI's top films of 2004

LOS ANGELES—The superhero adventures "Spider-Man 2" and "The Incredibles" made the American Film Institute's list of 2004's top 10 movies.

Also on the list released recently were the not-yet-released Howard Hughes film biography, "The Aviator," directed by Martin Scorsese, and "Million Dollar Baby," directed by Clint Eastwood, who also starred as a gym owner who trains a female boxer.

Rounding out the group's list, which did not rank the films, were the hit-man thriller, "Collateral"; the quirky romances, "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" and "Sideways";

Football drama

The football drama, "Friday Night Lights"; the drug-smuggling drama, "Maria Full of Grace"; and "Kinsey," a film biography of sexuality researcher Alfred Kinsey.

The institute's top 10 television programs of the year were HBO's "Curb Your Enthusiasm," "Deadwood," "The Sopranos" and "Something the Lord Made," ABC's "Desperate Housewives" and "Lost," FX's "Nip/Tuck" and "The Shield," Fox's "Arrested Development" and Comedy Central's "South Park."

The lists were chosen by 13-member panels of filmmakers, critics, scholars and AFI board members. Top films and shows will be honored at an AFI luncheon on Jan. 14. *AP*

CRUISE. Played a hit man in Michael Mann's action-thriller.

'Virtual history' humanizes famous personages

By Nestor U. Torre

HITLER. Exact lookalike.

IN the movies, the "motion capture" technique used in "The Polar Express" has shown film people and viewers alike a new way to do animation. On TV, a similarly innovative technique was unveiled last Sunday on the Discovery Channel with the telecast of "The Secret Plot to Kill Hitler."

What made the docu-drama innovative was its effort to achieve "virtual history" by using, not actors but animated lookalikes, to portray historical characters like Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin and Hitler as they were during the last couple of years of World War Two.

New technique

This new technique is better than using actors, because performers often don't look exactly like the well-known personages they're portraying. With the "virtual history" technique, the on-screen characters are exact renderings of famous people, so there's greater suspension of disbelief on viewers' part.

To be sure, the technique is still a bit rough, with some of the images coming off murky, and some movements looking slightly awkward. But more work should be able to take care of those glitches in future productions.

How is "virtual history" achieved? A still photograph or newsreel shot of the famous personage is scanned by computers to extrapolate three-dimensional views from different perspectives. A modification of the "motion capture" technique could also be utilized to allow for more subtle expressions and movements.

Methods

Whatever the technique or combination of methods used, the results are good enough to encourage other producers to try their hand at similar productions in the near future.

In time, "virtual history" could even "graduate" to the big screen, so we could eventually watch a historical epic with its protagonist played, not by a well-known performer, but by an exact looklike of the personage.

"The Secret Plot to Kill Hitler" made for fascinating viewing because it put its historical figures in private, personal situations that no newsreel footage could ever have captured.

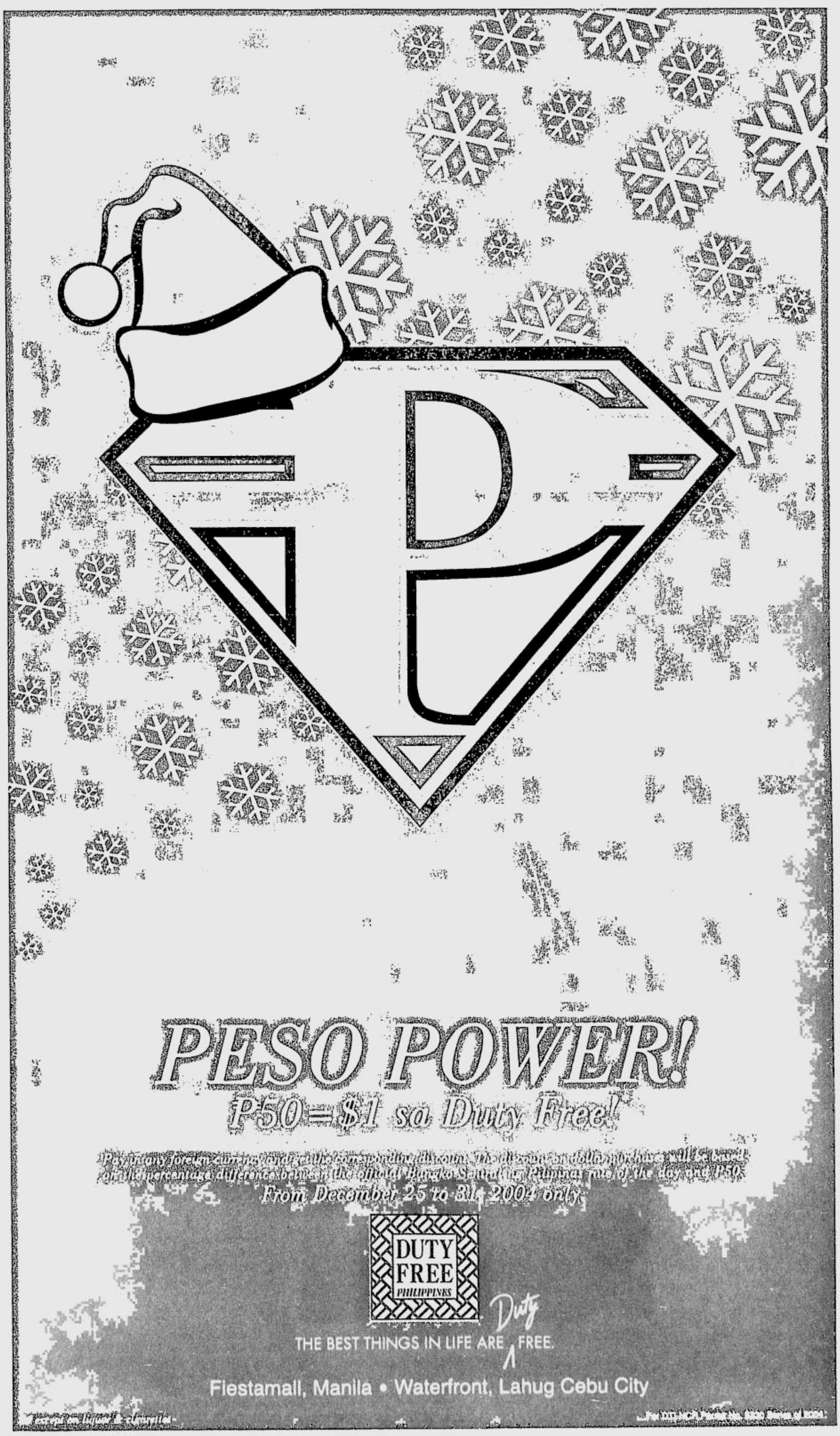
This is a significant use of the new technique because it humanizes historical figures, and thus makes their lives more empathetic to viewers.

Wheelchair

Thus, in "Hitler," we saw Churchill working on official papers in bed all morning, and Roosevelt being lifted by his son from his bed and into his wheelchair.

Even more tellingly, the innovative docu-drama revealed that, on the same day, on July 20, 1944, not only was there an attempt on Hitler's life, but Roosevelt also had a serious medical crisis.

This coincidence provided yet another proof that, while the four main wartime protagonists had their separate agendas, their fates were linked in ways sometimes too subtle to be instantly divined.



Friend pens book about Marlon Brando

By Bob Thomas

LOS ANGELES—Producer George Englund and his wife, actress Cloris Leachman, attended a party in 1956 given by Burgess Meredith for the elite of Hollywood—the men in coats and ties, the women in dazzling gowns.

Enter Marlon Brando, in a leather jacket.

Brando, the rage of the movie world then and noted for his aloofness, cordially greeted everyone. Then, he spotted Leachman, once a fellow student at the Actors Studio. He hurried over to her, met her husband and spent the entire evening talking to them.

Protection

He asked the couple if they would go out on a double date with him the following evening—he had a date with the fiery Italian star Anna Magnani. "I'm afraid she's going to climb all over me, and I need some protection," the actor appealed.

The Englunds agreed, and Brando escaped safely.

This past June, Englund visited the ailing actor at his hilltop home with commanding views of both Beverly Hills and the San Fernando Valley. Brando, his face puffy with a stubble of gray-white beard, lay in bed virtually helpless. Even though he had lost 80 pounds during his illness, he still was an enormous caricature of his once muscular self.

He drifted in and out of awareness, coughed painfully and was incontinent. Yet, he seemed warmed by the presence of Englund. After three hours, Englund left with a promise of returning. Brando died the next day.

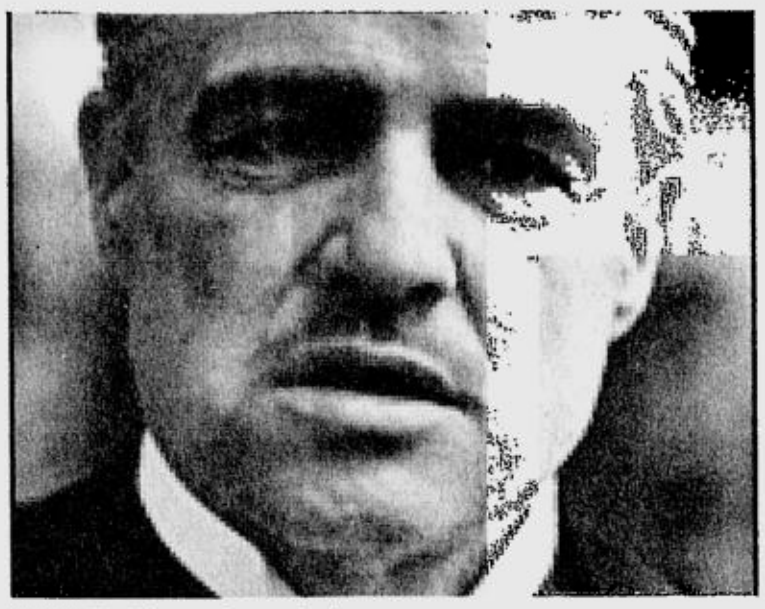
Extraordinary friendship

Thus, the beginning and the end of an extraordinary friendship that lasted 48 years, minus seven years when they weren't speaking. Together they traveled the world, met kings and presidents, talked with savants and peasants, made "The Ugly American" with Brando as star and Englund as director, consoled each other's family tragedies, hatched business deals that would later be dumped by Brando.

Englund relates the saga in a new book, "The Way It's Never Been Done Before," the title a reference to Brando's revolutionary style of acting.

Englund decided to write the biography when it appeared that Brando would not survive pulmonary fibrosis, a hardening of the lungs. He had hoped Brando would write a foreword.

"Most of the other books about Marlon were written by people who never knew Marlon," Englund reasoned. "I did." Englund, 78, arrived for an interview at a Valley bistro looking as trim and athletic as when he played beach volleyball on the sands of Santa Monica.



BRANDO. Distaste for authority.

Why did Brando become obese?

"When he came to Hollywood, he had power of a magnitude that nobody ever had before," Englund theorized. "He'd cow anybody, including heads of studios. During those times, he never had to exercise self-discipline. Whatever he wanted, he could get—anything, anybody, anywhere.

Genetic propensity

"He had a genetic propensity for gaining weight; his father was a portly man. Another thing was Marlon's desire to do things not the way they had been done before. He gained weight more prodigiously than anyone else. And, there was that lack of worthiness that was instilled in him by his father."

The book stresses Brando's haunted youth with a mother who was often too drunk to care for him and his sisters, and an absent father who returned to berate his son. Brando's suspicion of anyone who might take advantage of him and his distaste of authority stem from his childhood, Englund believes.

For "The Ugly American" (1963), a study of U.S. entanglement in Southeast Asia, Brando chose Englund, who had never directed a film.

Director and star worked compatibly during the location filming in Thailand, and most of the interiors at Universal Studio. Then, Brando became "removed and uncommunicative." Even though Englund was his best friend, Brando had started to view him as an authority figure.

10 children

In his late years, money became a problem. The support of 10 children, his own island in Tahiti and many other expenses caused him to accept roles in humdrum movies. In 1990, he dreamed up another moneymaking scheme: He would write his autobiography, and Englund would be his agent.

Englund, who had never been an agent, reluctantly accepted the task. All major publishers were interested, and Random House offered $3.5 million. Englund raised the ante to $5 million, and the publisher agreed.

Then, for two years, Brando didn't write a word, and the publisher wanted the advance back. Brando suggested that Englund write the book, but Brando would pay him only $25,000.

Englund declined after experts advised him that the job was worth up to 50 percent of the advance. Another writer was hired, and the book was a publishing disaster.

Offer

After Englund had negotiated an offer to build a first-class hotel on his Tahitian island, Brando killed the deal—"Not enough money."

Englund's patience was finally exhausted, and he quit. The seven-year gap in the friendship began. It ended through double tragedies: The deaths of Englund's young son and Brando's sister. The two longtime companions exchanged notes of condolences, and Englund made a phone call.

"It was pathetically simple," the author writes, "no looking back, no painful review. We were happy to hear each other's voice again, and we started talking like the Marlon and George we had always been." *AP*

An early Christmas gift

By Behn Cervantes

POET Domingo Landicho didn't feel right that a fellow artist was disappointed that there were no Filipino lyrics to the beloved Christmas carol, "Silent Night."

I had earlier asked a student to go to the Filipino Department for a copy of the lyrics, but she came back saying there was none. There was none at the University of the Philippines?

I was flabbergasted because I remember that, when I was detained at Camp Bagong Diwa in 1977, the group assembled there used to sing the carol in Tagalog.

Translation

It was the translation of Ed Maranan, who was confined in the same camp with Satur Ocampo, Ed de la Torre, Nelia Sancho, Pepe Luneta, Julius Fortuna and Peter Mutuc.

I loved the Maranan lyrics. They were not a direct translation of the original English words but instead, his version captured the lyricism of the German carol which he liberally instilled with nationalistic sentiments, as poets were wont to infuse any work during that decade.

I saved a mimeographed copy of his compilation of carol translations but after sometime, they can't be found among my papers!

Lyrics

I went directly to the department myself and asked why in the name of Christmas spirit didn't the Filipino Department of the State University have a copy of those lyrics? I further explained that my class was due to entertain *lolos* and *lolas* in the Anawim community in Montalban.

I was disappointed, indeed. I had already envisioned the residents of Anawim singing the carol in Tagalog! Bo Sanchez and Marissa Chikiamco in Montalban would be so delighted with our little Tagalog version for the elderly in that rustic setting.

Seeing my disappointment, Domeng promised to write me lyrics to the carol. Yes, he would also translate "Adeste Fidelis." Of course, I was grateful.

First stage director

Domeng stressed, however, that he was doing it especially for me. After all, I was his first stage director in his own play, "Dapithapon," starring Gloria Diaz as Gregoria de Jesus and Johnny Delgado and Dennis Asensio alternating as Andres Bonifacio. I had forgotten about his acting debut, but that 1977 UP Rep production quickly came to mind.

To my delight, he came to the office less than an hour with the lyrics of "Silent Night" and "Adeste Fidelis." It was already the 13th of December, so the Tagalog translations were my earliest Christmas gifts this year. Domeng grandly gifted me with his latest creation.

Domeng was beaming with goodwill and cheer. He made me very happy. Therefore, in the spirit of Christmas, I would like to share poet Domingo Landicho's goodwill with all of you. With these Filipino lyrics go my own Yuletide wish for this joyous season:

'Gabing Dalisay'

Gabing payapa, gabing payapa
Ang lahat, kaluwalhatian
Sa Birhen at Anak na hirang
Ang lahat ay nangapupugay
Diyos anak ang sumilang
Diyos ng sanlibutan!

NICKELODEON'S resident genius will be seen in eight special episodes.

Try to beat Jimmy Neutron

MONTAGE

WANT to be at par with Nickelodeon's resident genius? If you're 7 to 13 years old and love Jimmy Neutron, join Nickelodeon and Anchor Wham's "Can You Beat Jimmy?" on-air contest. But hurry! Contest ends Dec. 30, 2004.

How? Simple! From now until Dec. 30, Nickelodeon will feature eight special Jimmy Neutron episodes over four weeks, showcasing Jimmy's best inventions. Each specific episode will be followed by a "Can you best Jimmy?" pre-contest spot.

All you have to do is watch Jimmy Neutron in action, pick up some ideas on his inventions, and see how Nick's whiz kid puts it together.

Now, to beat Jimmy, you should start creating your own invention but remember to include an Anchor Wham bottle in your creation and send your inventions to Nickelodeon!

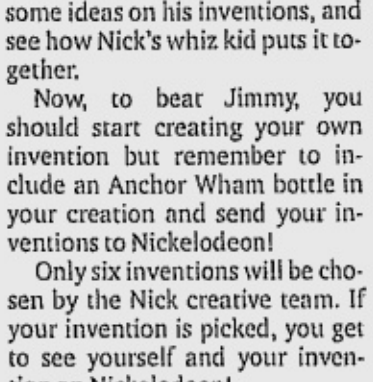
Only six inventions will be chosen by the Nick creative team. If your invention is picked, you get to see yourself and your invention on Nickelodeon!

Aside from that, a certified genius like you gets to win Jimmy's Genius Survival Kit! And who says the four runners-up go home with nothing? They also win Jimmy's special edition watches!

Watch out for pre-contest spots over Nick, or check out www.nicksplat.com.

SIA's entertaining way to fly

"Catwoman" leads the entertainment charge on Singapore Airlines (SIA) this month. Get drawn to SIA's lair of 400 plus entertainment options via its world-renowned KrisWorld, which has gotten even better with Wisemen, the world's first audio-video-on-demand in-flight entertainment system.



"CATWOMAN." Featured on top airlines' December video treats.

Passengers can fast forward, rewind, or pause through their choice of video or audio entertainment. That means you can watch the movie or listen to the program anytime you want. No more waiting! Truly, SIA's the great way to fly this Christmas season!

Featured cinematic blockbusters this month, besides "Catwoman," are "Before Sunset," "Shark Tale," "Elf," "Paparazzi," "De-Lovely," "We Don't Live Here Anymore," "Love Actually," "Princess Diaries 2: The Royal Engagement," "Wicker Park," among others.

If it's the classics you prefer, George Seaton's must-see "Miracle on 34th Street" is sure to turn on the Christmas charm.

KrisWorld features hit TV comedy series, as well: "Frasier," "Everybody Loves Raymond," "Friends," "Two and a Half Men," and "That '70s Show."

For those into dramatic TV series, there's "CSI," "Darren Brown," "Monk," plus countless shows and documentaries on technology, music, sports, lifestyle, travel, business and fashion.

Movies on TV

On HBO, Dec. 25 at 9 a.m., "Secret Santa." 5:25 p.m., "Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood." 11:25 p.m., "The Matrix Reloaded." Dec. 26 at 10;55 a.m., "Alive." 11:30 p.m., "The Ring." Dec. 27 at 1:30 p.m., "About Schmidt." 7 p.m., "Tears of the Sun." 10:30 p.m., "Doc Hollywood." 12:15 p.m., "Soapdish."

On Cinemax, Dec. 25 at 12:15 p.m., "Black Hawk Down." 10:45 p.m., "A Few Good Men." Dec. 26 at 12 noon, "American Crime." 7 p.m., "The Sum of All Fears." Dec. 27 at 9:30 a.m., "Strictly Ballroom." 5 p.m., "Nuts." 9 p.m., "City by the Sea." 1:50 a.m., "Pillow Talk."

'Kekexili' wins best film at Chinese Oscars

TAICHUNG, Taiwan—A bleak portrayal of life on a Tibetan plateau won best film at the Chinese-language version of the Oscars recently, becoming the first entry from China to bag the top prize in Taiwan.

"Kekexili: Mountain Patrol," a second feature by Lu Chuan, beat internationally acclaimed director Wong Kar Wai's latest movie, "2046," at the Golden Horse Awards, which showcases films from Taiwan, Hong Kong and China.

Hong Kong's Andy Lau took the best actor award for his role in the popular cop drama, "Infernal Affairs III," after losing his bid for three consecutive years.

Thriving career

"It must be difficult for some of you to believe that I can act," joked Lau, who also has a thriving career as a pop singer, after accepting his award in a crisp white suit.

Taiwan has played host to the Golden Horse Awards for 41 years, but contestants from Hong Kong and China have stolen the spotlight in recent years as Taiwan's once-thriving movie industry is in decline. This year's top prizes were distributed more evenly, however.

The best actress award went to Taiwan's Yang Kuei Mei, a veteran actress and four-time Golden Horse nominee, for her role in "The Moon also Rises," a melancholy drama about a divorced single mother and her adolescent daughter in a seaside town.

"I lost year after year, but I have been brave. I finally won," said the actress who, overcome with emotion, burst into tears onstage.

LU. His second feature became the first entry from China to bag top prize.

LAU. Best actor for his perfromance in "Infernal Affairs 3."

"We must support Taiwan movies. They are Taiwan's culture," Yang said in the central city of Taichung, where the glittering red-carpet ceremony was held this year.

Cannes winner "2046," about the love life of an erotic novelist played by Hong Kong's Tony Leung, went into the awards as a favorite with eight nominations, but only won two trophies: best art direction and best original film score.

It lost best film to "Kekexili," which is based on the true story of a journalist who joins a Tibetan volunteer patrol chasing a ring of poachers trading in antelope wool. The film also took best cinematography for Cao Yu.

Director Lu Chuan said he was glad he could obtain a visa at the last minute and come to Taiwan to receive the award. Taiwan imposes strict rules on visitors from its political foe, China, which claims the self-governing island as part of its territory.

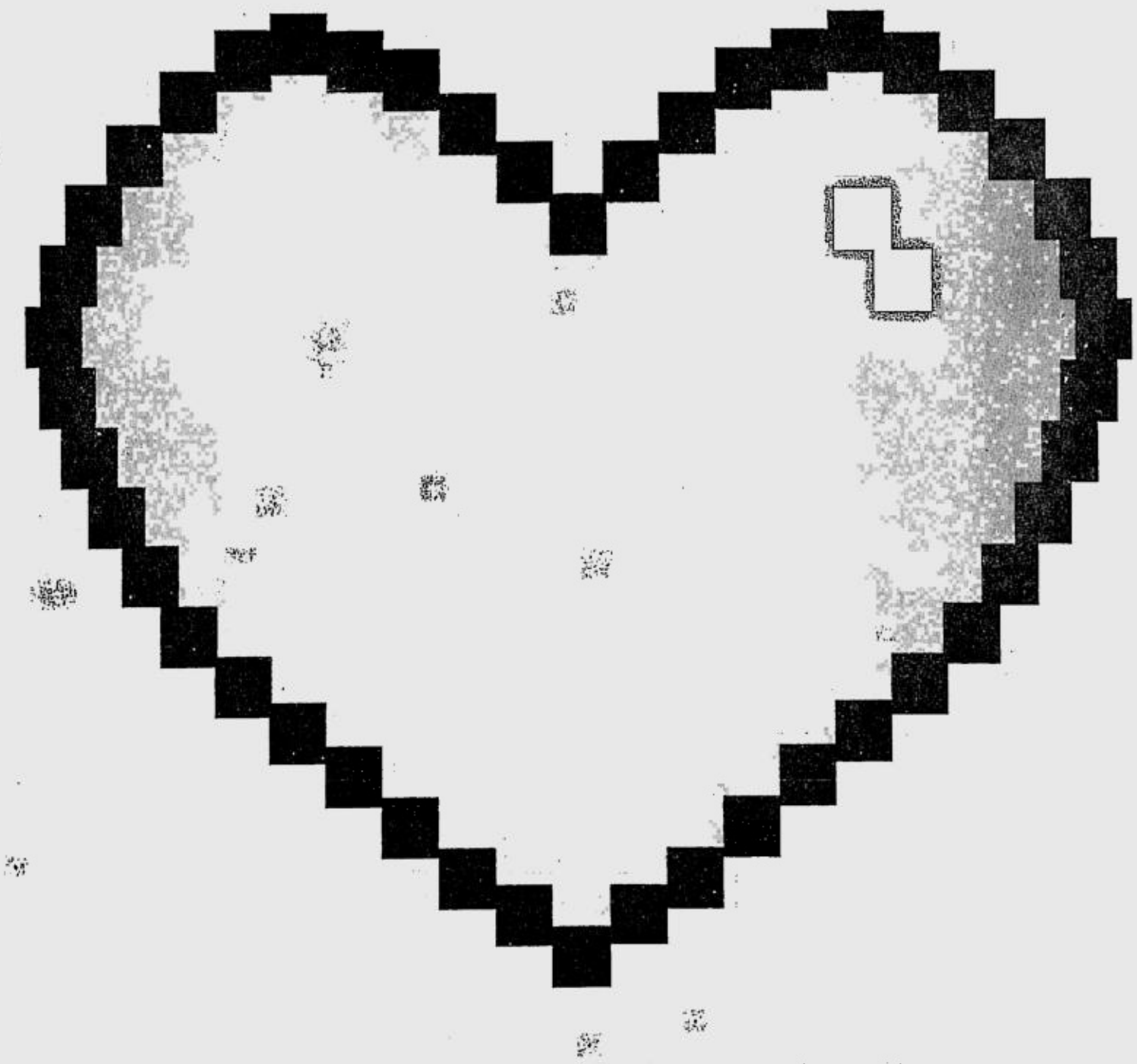
Hong Kong's Johnnie To was awarded best director for his "Breaking News," which combines the territory's favorite cop drama genre with its paparazzi-style journalism.

Visual effects

Best supporting actress went to Bai Ling for her role in "Three...Extremes: Dumplings," while Daniel Wu bagged the best supporting actor for his role in Hong Kong's "New Police Story." "New Police Story," starring Jackie Chan, also bagged best visual effects and best action choreography.

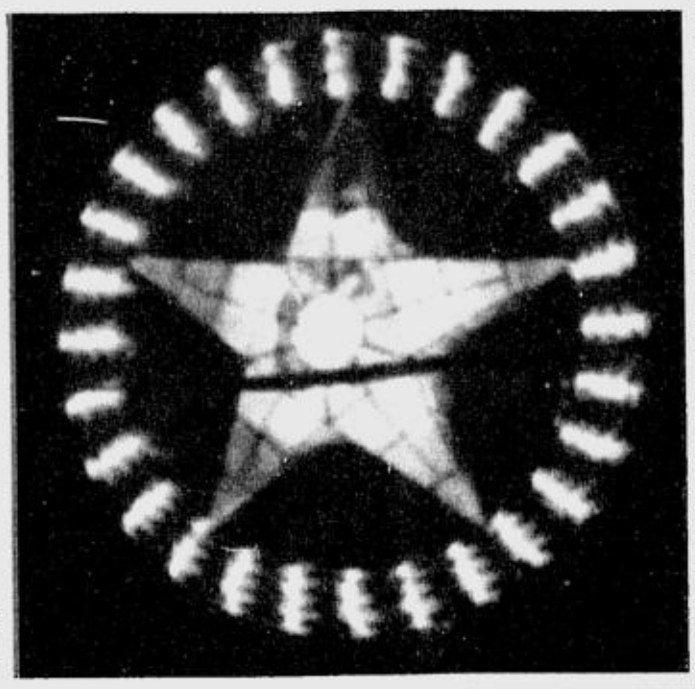
Renowned Taiwan-born director Ang Lee, whose martial arts epic, "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," had won four Oscars, attended the ceremony to show his support for Chinese-language films.

"Some things never change, such as our passion for Chinese movies," Lee said, adding that Chinese films could compete with better-funded Hollywood blockbusters if filmmakers use their creativity. *Reuters*

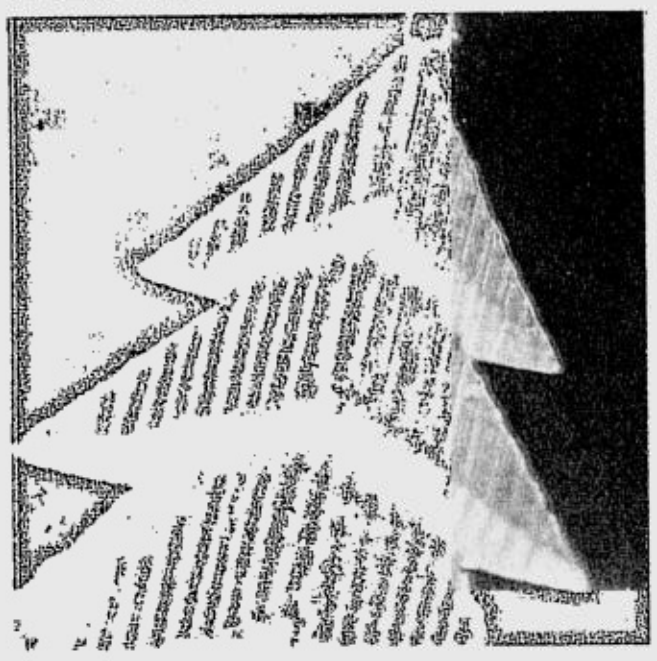


What do you love about Christmas?

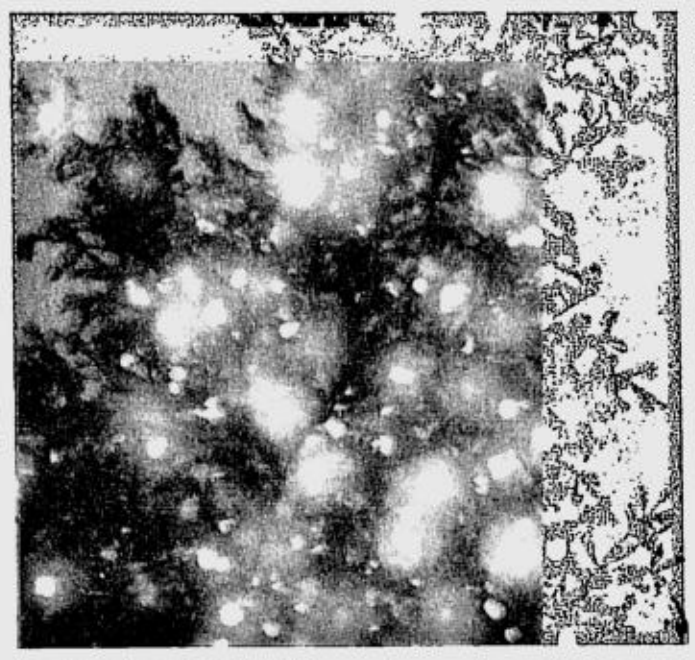
I ♥ noche buena



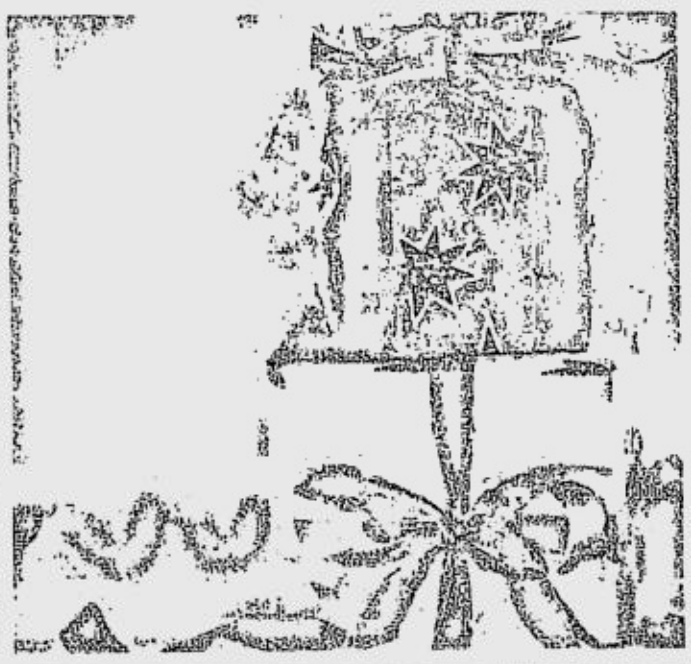
I ♥ my kids



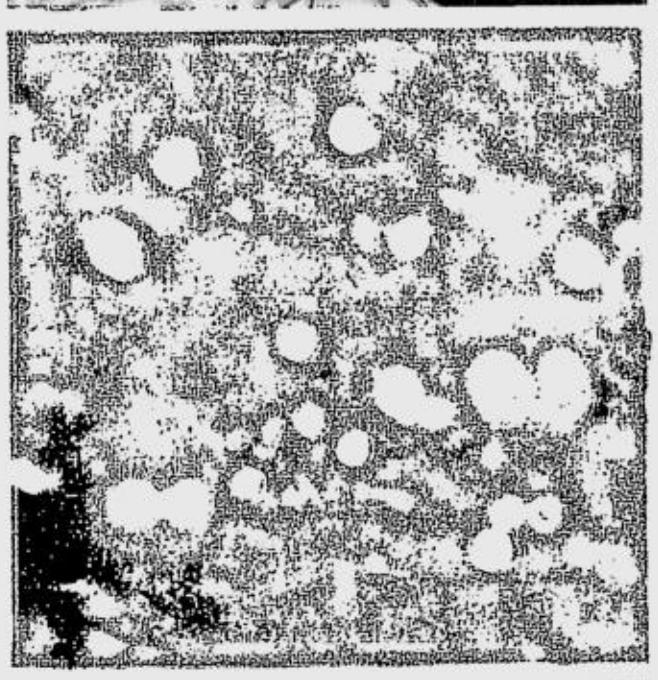
I ♥ simbang gabi



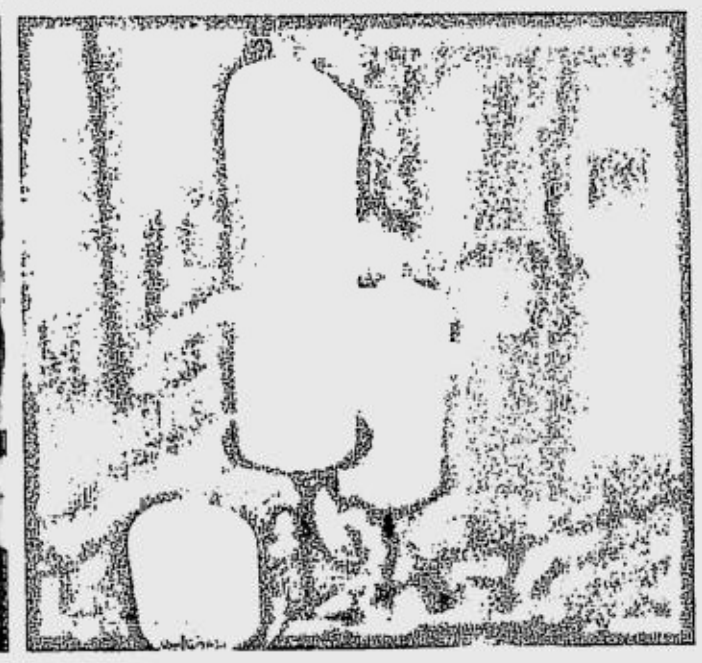
I ♥ caroling



I ♥ coming home

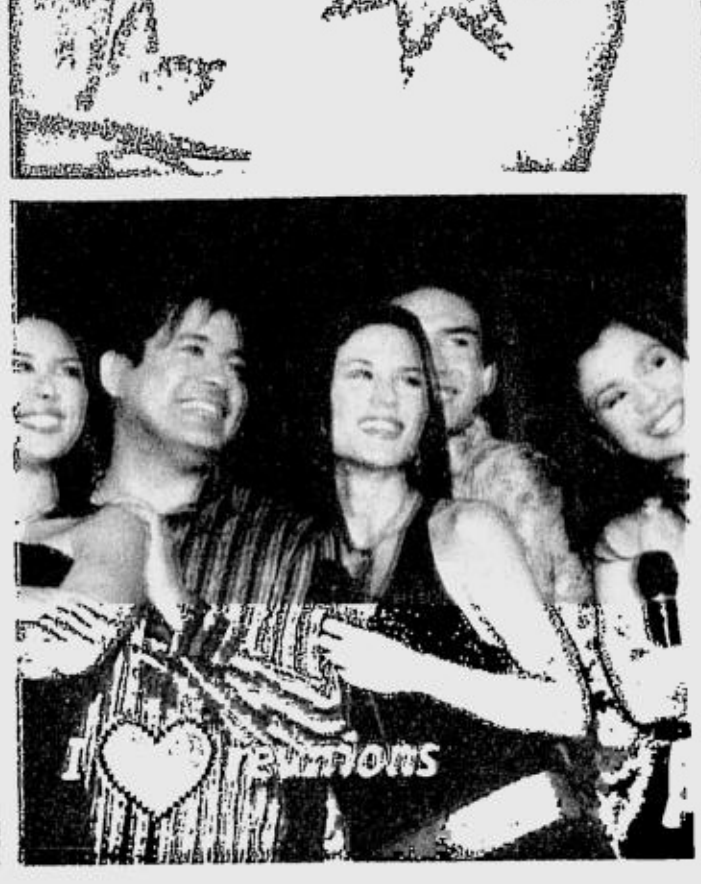


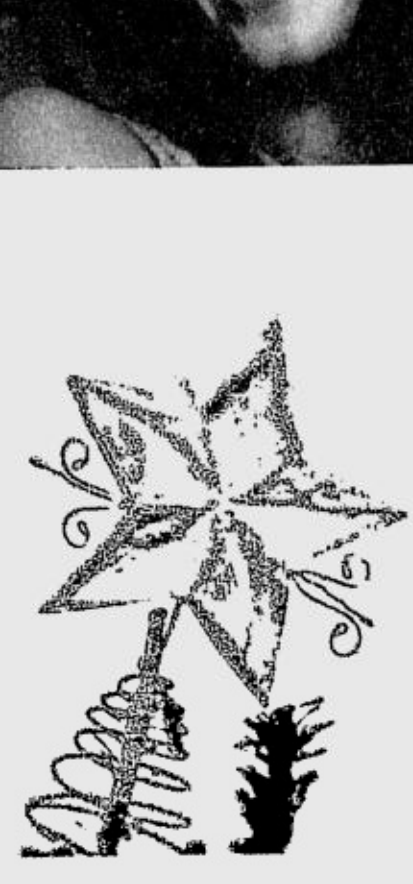
I ♥ my friends



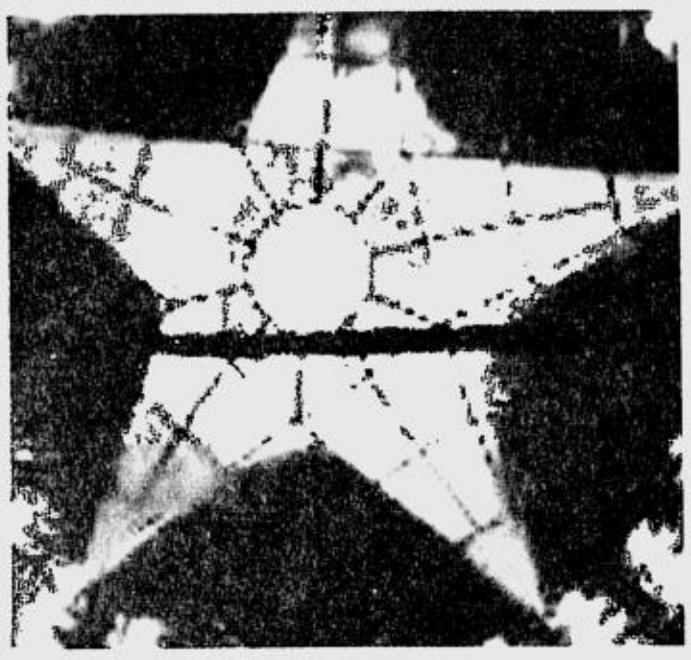
I ♥ my wife

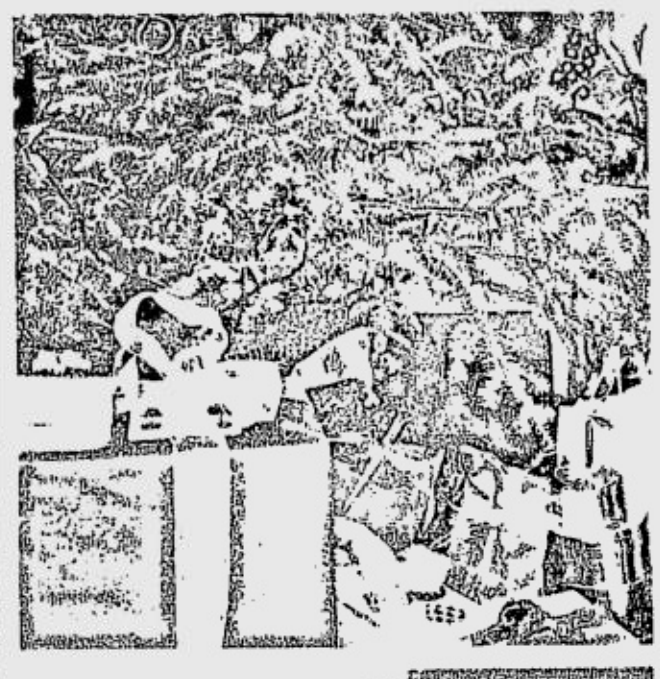
I ♥ my parents


I ♥ Filipinos



I ♥ th





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Simply Amazing!

'Little Britain' crowned UK comedy king

LUCAS. Shared best actor award with co-star David Walliams.

LONDON—The quirky sketch show, "Little Britain," beat off BBC rival "The Office" to take top honors at the British Comedy Awards 2004 recently.

The show, which parodies life in suburban Britain and features a bizarre array of characters, won the best TV comedy award, while its stars Matt Lucas and David Walliams were jointly named best TV comedy actor.

"We do get the chance to perform in 'Little Britain' alongside great people," said Lucas.

The show, which began life on radio, developed a cult audience on digital channel BBC3 thanks to the popularity of its characters, such as "Dafydd", who refuses to accept he is not the only gay in a Welsh village.

Success

Its success prompted a move to the mainstream BBC1 channel although its content had to be toned down.

There was some consolation for "The Office," which swept the awards last year, with Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant winning a special prize for writing the hit comedy.

"The show has won an awful lot of awards in the last couple of years, too much," Gervais said.

"It's got embarrassing to be honest." The awards ceremony, broadcast live from ITV1's London studios on the South Bank, has gained a notorious reputation for swearing and general tomfoolery.

This year was no exception with Brigitte Nielsen, former wife of Sylvester Stallone, stroking the head of former British government minister Robin Cook while handing out one award.

Other notable winners included presenters Ant McPartlin and Declan Donnelly who added the awards for best comedy entertainment personality and best comedy entertainment program to their growing list of accolades.

"The Simpsons" was named best international comedy show and its creator Matt Groening picked up an outstanding contribution award from Professor Stephen Hawking, who has appeared on the cult cartoon.

Tactless doctor

Caroline Quentin was named best TV comedy actress and Martin Clunes' "Doc Martin," a drama about a tactless doctor living in a small Cornish village, won best TV comedy drama.

Catherine Tate won best comedy newcomer for "The Catherine Tate Show," "Nighty Night" was named Britain's best new TV comedy and "School of Rock" beat "Shaun of the Dead" to the best comedy film award. *Reuters*

DAMON. New thriller after "Bourne Supremacy."

DICAPRIO. Begged off from Robert De Niro's project.

Damon to replace DiCaprio in spy flick

LOS ANGELES—"Bourne Identity" star Matt Damon has signed on to replace Leonardo DiCaprio in Robert De Niro's new spy film, "The Good Shepherd," the industry press said recently.

Damon, 34, is taking over from "Titanic" megastar DiCaprio in the $110-million project that tells the story of the US Central Intelligence Agency through the eyes of an agent, Daily Variety said.

Project

It is unclear why DiCaprio has left the project in which he was due to co-star.

The disappearance of the movie's star comes after Initial Entertainment Group pulled out of financing the big-budget movie.

De Niro is directing, producing and co-starring in the film that is due to begin production in March, and will be distributed in North America by Universal Pictures. The film is loosely based on the life of famed CIA Cold War spook, James Jesus Angleton.

"The Good Shepherd" tells the story of James Wilson, played by Damon and De Niro at different stages of the character's life, who is recruited to become a founding member of the American spy agency, and follows him through his 40-year career. *AFP*

Third 'Lord of the Rings' film voted 2004's top film in BBC poll

LONDON—It's a hat trick for Tolkien.

"The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King"—the third film based on the trilogy by J.R.R. Tolkien—has been voted best film of the year in a poll for the British Broadcasting Corp. television program "Film 2004," hosted by Jonathan Ross.

Title

The two previous Lord of the Rings films, "The Two Towers" and "The Fellowship Of The Ring," took the title in 2002 and 2003, respectively.

"Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind," starring Kate Winslet and Jim Carrey, was at No. 2 this year, followed by another Winslet movie, "Finding Neverland," that starred Johnny Depp as Peter Pan creator J.M. Barrie.

"Lost In Translation," a quirky film which starred Bill Murray and Scarlett Johansson, was fourth, with "Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban" coming in fifth.

The low-budget British film, "Shaun of the Dead," was at No. 6, followed by the Chinese martial arts epic, "Hero."

Animated hit, "The Incredibles," blockbuster "Spider-Man 2" and the Tom Cruise thriller, "Collateral," completed the top 10. *AP*

McKELLEN. Played Gandalf in the "LOTR" trilogy.

Remembering the characters who made New York theater worth watching in 2004

NEW YORK—An authoritarian nun. A paranoid young man and his willing helpmate. A delightfully interfering mother. A firebrand AIDS activist. A low-comedy Greek god. A serial killer and the mother of one of his victims.

They are among the characters who made New York theater worth watching in 2004. Here then, a top 10 list of the year's best shows—and the performers—who brought them to life:

KURTZ. Portrays brokenhearted mother in "Frozen."

Bracing drama

—"Doubt": Just in time, John Patrick Shanley's bracing drama came to the rescue of a disappointing fall season. The play stars the extraordinary Cherry Jones as Sister Aloysius, a no-nonsense principal of a Catholic grade school in the Bronx borough of New York City. The woman has her suspicions about Father Flynn and his interest in one of the school's young male students, and she's out to prove them. Therein lies the play. One thing about "Doubt" is certain: This Manhattan Theater Club production undoubtedly will make its way from off-Broadway to Broadway sometime in 2005.

—"Bug": Tracy Letts is a triple-threat kind of a guy—an actor, director and playwright. It was as a playwright, though, that Letts scored big with "Bug," a vivid tale of trailer-trash debauchery. As two lost souls united in a seedy Oklahoma City motel room, Shannon Cochran and Michael Shannon were just about perfect in their portrayal of all-consuming paranoia.

—"Well": Lisa Kron's freewheeling and very funny memoir at the Public Theater dealt, at times, with the star's health issues and how she coped. But it found its heart in the performance of Jayne Houdyshell, portraying Kron's mother, a woman who couldn't help having her say—whether it was wanted or not—about her daughter's life.

Serial killer

—"Frozen": An unnerving drama by Bryony Lavery about a serial killer and the lives he destroyed, particularly the mother of a little girl he murdered. Brian F. O'Bryne, in a Tony-winning performance, was the murderer, and a moving Swoosie Kurtz the child's brokenhearted mother who bravely put her life back together.

—"The Normal Heart": Nearly 20 years after it was first seen off-Broadway, Larry Kramer's call to arms about the AIDS crisis remains a potent piece of political theater. This Public Theater revival, which had too brief a run, was ignited by Raul Esparza as a committed protester—not unlike Kramer—who was unafraid to shout to get what he wanted.

—"The Frogs": Nathan Lane played the Greek god, Dionysos, in this mixture of low comedy and high-minded satire, laced with a Stephen Sondheim score that included a half-dozen new songs. The plot was loosely—very loosely—based on the Aristophanes' classic and concerns a quest to find a great writer to save the world. Will it be William Shakespeare or George Bernard Shaw? With Roger Bart, another accomplished clown, joining Lane on stage, "The Frogs" proved to be a show that could, without hesitation, be called a real musical comedy.

—"Twelve Angry Men": Philip Bosco and Boyd Gaines head the cast of the current Roundabout Theater Company production of Reginald Rose's jury-room, life-and-death drama, which began life as a TV program and then became a movie in the 1950s. The play may creak, but the production, directed by Scott Ellis, does not. It's ensemble acting at its finest.

—"Gem of the Ocean": August Wilson's latest play in his monumental, decade-by-decade look at the black experience in the 20th century. The mystical, magical "Gem," set in 1904, actually begins the cycle and features an amazing performance by Phylicia Rashad as the ancient Aunt Esther, a repository of black wisdom since the beginning of slavery. It was quite a year for Rashad, who in June won a Tony Award for playing the matriarchal Lena Younger in last season's hit revival of Lorraine Hansberry's "A Raisin in the Sun" that brought Sean Combs to Broadway.

Cloning

—"A Number": Caryl Churchill looks at cloning in this current New York Theater Workshop production, and her play is an intriguing look at whether nature or nurture makes the man. In his first New York stage appearance in years, Sam Shepard is a believable, guilt-ridden father trying to make sense of his many look-alike offspring. But it's the incredible Dallas Roberts, as three distinct versions of the son, who blazingly brings Churchill's provocative work to life.

—"Barbara Cook's Broadway": The most satisfying musical-theater experience of the year. In her latest one-woman show, Cook, the great ingenue of Broadway's golden age, saluted composers and lyricists who wrote at the same time she was building her career in the New York theater. At 77 and still in marvelous voice, she has earned the right to be called legendary. *AP*

Greeks happy with Oliver Stone's 'Alexander'

ATHENS—Mainstream Greek audiences and film critics have welcomed Oliver Stone's film, "Alexander," relieved that it did not depict the nation's most revered hero as gay, blood-thirsty and non-Greek, as they feared.

"The film is one of the best promotion campaigns that Greece could ever have," state television NET said recently, after the three-hour epic had a massive release in some 80 theaters across the country.

JOLIE AND FARRELL. Play mother and son in film bio of Greek warrior.

Innuendos

"The movie is verbose, but it accurately deals with historical facts," conservative daily Kathimerini said. "The few innuendos about Alexander's alleged bisexuality were almost imperceptible," a viewer told NET.

A lawyer's group that had initiatied legal action to censor the film dropped their case after watching a movie preview.

History is a key ingredient of modern Greeks' national identity. Same-sex relations are stigmatized in the country, and average Greeks reject notions that homosexuality was common among their ancestors.

Greeks also feared the film could provide ammunition to their northern neighbor Macedonia, much of whose Slav and Albanian population claim Alexander as part of their national heritage.

Greece refuses to recognize the former Yugoslav republic as "Macedonia" for fear that the name implies territorial claims on the adjacent, same-name northern Greek province, Alexander's birthplace in fourth century BC. AFP

WONDER TO EMINEM: "Kicking someone when he's down is not a good thing."

Stevie Wonder bashes Eminem for Jackson criticism

LOS ANGELES—In a rare public outburst, Stevie Wonder has blasted Eminem for ridiculing Michael Jackson in a video, and suggested the rapper was hypocritical because he owed his success to poor and black people.

Jackson himself has already lambasted Eminem's video for the song, "Just Lose It," which makes light of child molestation charges against the self-styled "King of Pop." Wonder joined the fray by telling Billboard magazine that he was "really disappointed" in Eminem.

Respect

"Kicking someone when he's down is not a good thing," Wonder was quoted as telling the music industry trade publication. "I have much respect for his work, though I don't think he's as good as 2Pac. But, I was disappointed that he would let himself go to such a level."

People of color

Added Wonder, "He has succeeded on the backs of people predominantly in that lower pay bracket, people of color. So, for him to come out like that is bull----." A spokesman for Eminem was not available for comment.

The song, hailed by the Los Angeles Times as a "playful look at celebrity voyeurism," is expected to be among the nominees when contenders for the annual Grammy Awards are unveiled. *Reuters*

'Mary Poppins' opens to rave reviews

LONDON—"Mary Poppins," the musical, conjured magical reviews from the British press at its opening night.

"Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious," wrote The Times of London in a five-star rating of a performance, declaring the big-budget show "better in every way than the Disney film."

The tale of the eccentric, umbrella-toting nanny "simply blows away the opposition from rival West End musicals," commented The Independent, adding that its star Laura Michelle Kelly was "practically perfect in every way."

London's Evening Standard splashed a breathless review over two pages headlined: "A spoonful of sensation."

Rooftop dance number

The Guardian's reviewer was slow to warm to the show, but eventually was transported to "seventh heaven" by the chimney-sweeps' rooftop dance number.

A crowd liberally studded with British show biz figures—and their children—packed the Prince Edward Theater to see one of the year's most eagerly anticipated London productions.

The theater world hopes the show—staged by Walt Disney Co. and mega-producer Cameron Mackintosh—will bring just the injection of excitement and cash that the West End needs after a string of box-office disappointments.

It's been 70 years since P.L. Travers dreamt up Mary Poppins for her series of 1930s children's books, and 40 years since Julie Andrews brought the no-nonsense babysitter to life on the screen.

Now, theatergoers must judge whether the latest interpretation of the classic story still has the magic of the originals.

Sentimental side

Some critics thought it went one better, toughening up the film's sentimental side. "I never thought in my wildest fantasies that Walt Disney's syrup mountain of a film could be worked up into such a sharp, thoughtful stage musical," wrote Nicholas de Jongh in the Evening Standard.

The warm opening-night crowd cheered Gavin Lee's loose-limbed chimney sweep Bert and Kelly's stern but surprising Mary as they led the Banks children on magical adventures in Edwardian London.

There was particular applause for scene-stealing Jenny Galloway as the cook, Mrs. Brill—and for lighting and effects that justified the show's multimillion pound budget.

Thomas Schumacher, head of Disney's theatrical division, is certain that Mary Poppins' enduring qualities—"magic, zaniness, inappropriateness, a curious disrespect for authority"—will thrive onstage.

"One thing Mary Poppins says, in the book and in our show, is, 'I never explain anything,'" Schumacher told The Associated Press. "That allows her extraordinary freedom. We don't even know who the heck this woman is. Is she a witch? Is she a fairy? Is she a guardian angel? She explodes into the imagination."

Disney, which owns the songs and storylines from the 1964 movie, and Mackintosh, who holds the stage rights to the Poppins books, agreed in 2001 to collaborate on a stage adaptation, after years of impasse.

Credits

Mackintosh's credits include megahits "Cats" and "Les Miserables."

Also involved in the new "Mary Poppins" are director Richard Eyre, former head of Britain's National Theater, and choreographer Matthew Bourne, creator of a renowned all-male "Swan Lake" and the Olivier award-winning "Play Without Words."

The show's book is by Academy Award-winning scriptwriter Julian Fellowes ("Gosford Park," "Vanity Fair"), while composer George Stiles and lyricist Anthony Drewe have written six new songs to complement the film's tunes by brothers Robert and Richard Sherman.

The team is walking a fine line, trying to appeal to fans of the books and movie while adapting the story to a new medium. New songs join old favorites like "A Spoonful of Sugar," "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" and "Chim Chim Cher-ee."

Advance ticket sales are strong for the show's initial booking period through September 2005.

The creators say they're confident the lives of the wealthy, Edwardian-era Banks family will still speak to audiences. The story's emotional tone, they believe, is strikingly modern.

Eyre has said that the story "is about an unhappy family being healed." *AP*

KELLY. Rave reviews for her portrayal of the umbrella-toting nanny.

BIG-BUDGET stage musical is better than the Disney film.

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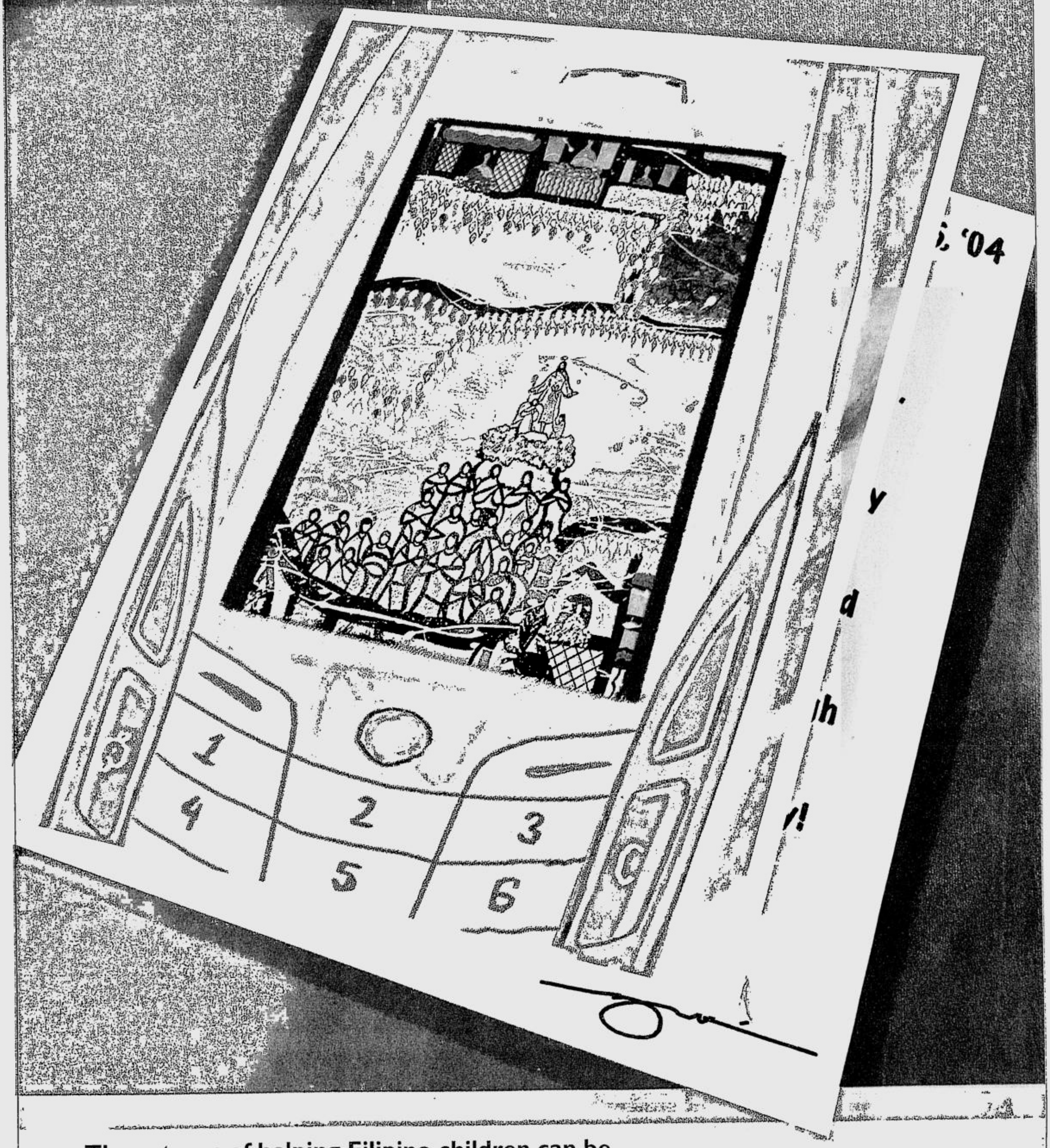

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2004

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BUSINESS

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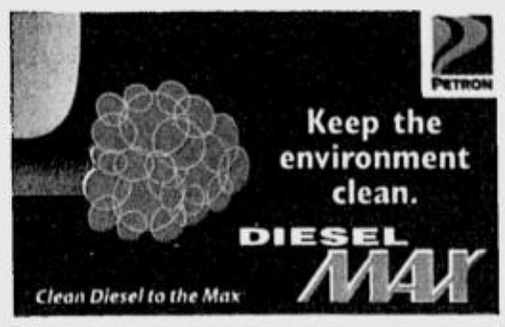


Congress urged to pass more tax measures

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance has reiterated its call for the immediate legislation of the proposed revenue-raising measures, saying the passage of the "sin" taxes law was not enough to dispel threats of a credit rating downgrade.

The DOF said the measures, which include an increase in taxes and a reduction of fiscal incentives, should be passed in the first quarter of next year to convince credit-rating agencies that the Philippines was capable of squarely addressing its fiscal problem.

"The DOF stressed the need for further reform measures to be passed in early 2005 as credit-rating agencies continue to focus on the country's need to improve on its revenues-to-GDP ratio, currently one of the lowest in Asia," said the joint statement of the government's economic team.

The Philippines avoided a credit-rating downgrade by Fitch Ratings, which decided to retain the country's ratings, and merely revised its outlook on the Philippines from stable to negative.

The move came after the government was able to sell the Masinloc coal-fired power plant, the biggest asset of the state-owned National Power Corp., and ease the power firm's debt burden. Fitch's move was also influenced by the decision of the Supreme Court to open the mining industry to foreign investors, which the business sector hailed as a significant step to improve the country's image abroad.

Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong said the successful bidding of Masinloc, the SC decision and the relatively high gross domestic product growth for the first three quarters of the year, which averaged at 6.5 percent, were the factors that helped save the country from a downgrade by Fitch.

However, the country still faces a possible downgrade by Moody's Investors Service, which earlier said the slow progress of the fiscal reform measures in Congress could weigh down on the country's credit rating.

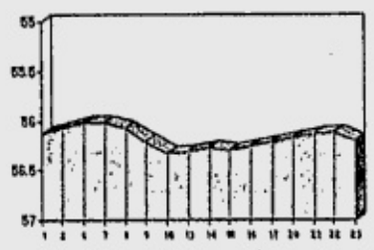
The economic team earlier said Congress should pass at least three measures before the end of this year to ease downside pressure on the credit rating. Congress, however, was only able to pass the "sin" taxes law, which raised imposts on cigarettes and alcohol.

CONGRESS/ B2

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



₱56.21 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 23, 2004

¥104.21 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 23, 2004

GOLD: $441.80-442.30
per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 23, 2004

December 24, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.746882	1.000000	56.1440
Japan	Yen	0.007169	0.009598	0.5389
United Kingdom	Pound	1.430055	1.914700	107.4989
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.095983	0.128512	7.2152
Switzerland	Franc	0.647941	0.867528	48.7065
Canada	Dollar	0.601742	0.805672	45.2336
Singapore	Dollar	0.455555	0.609942	34.2446
Australia	Dollar	0.572191	0.766107	43.0123
Bahrain	Dinar*	1.981224	2.652661	148.9310
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.199163	0.266660	14.9714
Brunei	Dollar	0.454170	0.608088	34.1405
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000080	0.000107	0.0060
Thailand	Baht	0.019128	0.025611	1.4379
UAE	Dirham	0.203377	0.272301	15.2881
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.338900	75.1712
Argentina	Peso	0.252197	0.337667	18.9580
Brazil	Real	0.276213	0.369822	20.7633
Denmark	Kroner	0.134510	0.180096	10.1113
India	Rupee	0.017056	0.022836	1.2821
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.196574	0.263193	14.7767
Mexico	New Peso	0.067039	0.089759	5.0394
New Zealand	Dollar	0.532460	0.712911	40.0257
South Africa	Rand	0.132247	0.177066	9.9412
Korea	Won	0.000710	0.000950	0.0533
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023152	0.030998	1.7404

BSP to spend $1B for debt service in 2005

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas will spend at least $1 billion for its external debt servicing in 2005, part of which will be funded by fresh foreign borrowings in the second semester.

In an interview, BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said that out of the institution's total financing requirements next year, about $800 million would consist of principal and interest payments to foreign commercial creditors.

The remainder would represent obligations to bilateral and multilateral institutions, including the International Monetary Fund.

The BSP's requirements would account for about 22 percent of the country's $4.5-billion foreign debt servicing next year, excluding payments to residents and the government's contingent liabilities from independent power producers.

But Buenaventura said the BSP would not likely resort to new foreign borrowings until the second semester of next year.

"That's only because we'd like to give way to the national government, which will need the money for the power sector restructuring," Buenaventura said.

The national government is set to absorb up to P500 billion worth of debts owed by the cash-strapped National Power Corp.

The BSP chief said there was no need for the BSP to rush into new foreign borrowings "unless there's a very good opportunity and market receptivity or if the (gross international) reserves have gone down to alarming levels."

However, he said the good opportunity to tap external borrowings would likely be in the second semester, when the benefits of the tax reform measures pushed by the government would have been felt.

"When we've proven to the world that we're committed to fiscal consolidation and we're on our way to serious reforms, then our spreads would improve," Buenaventura said.

"But if we fail to deliver, the cost of borrowings will be higher," he said.

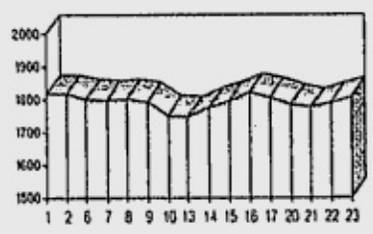
The government's economic team believed the country has overcome the inertia in passing painful fiscal reforms. For instance, the increase in excise tax-

BSP/ B2

STOCK MARKET

Markets closed for the holidays

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

FINANCIAL markets were closed yesterday and on Monday for the Christmas holidays.

Share prices managed to close 0.99 percent higher on Thursday, lifted by continued bargain-hunting and year-end window-dressing.

Traders said the market would likely post further gains in the remaining two trading days of this year, but the expected rise may not be enough to break the main index's recent five-year high of 1,865.

Stock trading resumes tomorrow and on the 29th, before closing again until after the New Year.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index rose 17.75 points last Thursday to 1,807.49 after trading between 1,789.74 and 1,814.04. The broader all-shares index rose 3.64 points to 1,150.20.

Volume totaled 1.38 billion shares worth P626.96 million from 1.85 billion shares worth P458.9 million on Wednesday.

Gainers beat losers 46 to 24, with 41 stocks unchanged.

"The market has started to pick up again and we may likely see this trend for the remainder of the trading sessions (this year)," said Ron Rodrigo of Accord Capital Equities.

Foreign fund managers were net buyers, suggesting they were either window-dressing their portfolios for the year-end or positioning ahead of the New Year, Rodrigo added.

Telecom giant Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) was the most actively traded stock last Thursday, up P10 to P1,320.

Bank of the Philippine Islands gained 50 centavos to close at P51.50. Shopping mall developer SM Prime Holdings rose 20 centavos to P7.80. Ayala Corp. closed unchanged at P6.50, while its real estate flagship, Ayala Land Inc., was up 10 centavos at P7.10.

SEC OKs Piltel capital hike

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission has approved the plan by Pilipino Telephone Corp. (Piltel) to raise its capital to P12.8 billion from P3.5 billion.

The increase in capital will allow Piltel to accommodate the full conversion of series "K" preferred shares into common shares.

This will also allow Piltel to have available common shares for issuance upon the exercise of conversion rights by preferred stockholders.

Piltel is increasing its capital by P9.3 billion to P12.8 billion while its subscribed capital will also increase to P11.8 billion from P2.5 billion.

In June 2001, 59.29 million series "K" preferred convertible shares were issued at P340 each or equivalent to P20.75 billion to creditors that participated in its debt-restructuring program.

Piltel's sister firm, Smart Communications Inc. acquired 59.29 million series "K" shares from parent Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. Smart has already converted 4.82 million of these shares into common shares of Piltel last July.

The company now wants to convert the remaining 54.46 million series "K" shares worth P108.93 million into 9.25 billion common shares at an issue price of P18.52 billion.

Smart will own 92 percent of Piltel after converting the Series "K" preferred shares into common shares followed by the purchase of PLDT's remaining common Piltel shares. Smart is buying 92 percent of Piltel from PLDT. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

Deutsche Bank ranked top securities dealer

DEUTSCHE Bank Manila has been named the top leading Government Securities Eligible Dealer among private commercial banks by the Bureau of the Treasury.

The ranking acknowledged banks that have achieved the greatest market share during the Treasury's primary auction for treasury bills and bonds from October 2003 to October 2004.

Enrico Cruz, Deutsche Bank's chief country officer for the Philippines, said: "This shows clearly that our focus on delivering the highest quality securities dealing expertise is acknowledged by our clients. We will continue to innovate and offer our clients' leading edge product capabilities and solutions."

With approximately 849 billion euros in assets and 65,700 employees, Deutsche Bank offers financial services in 74 countries throughout the world. Deutsche Bank competes to be the leading global provider of financial solutions.

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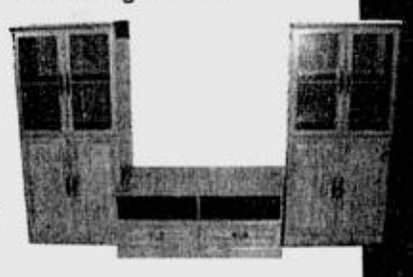

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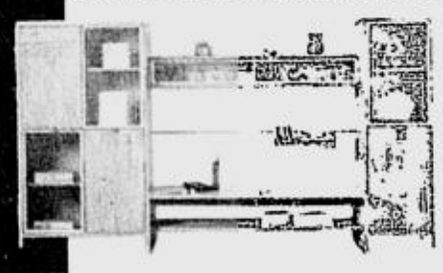

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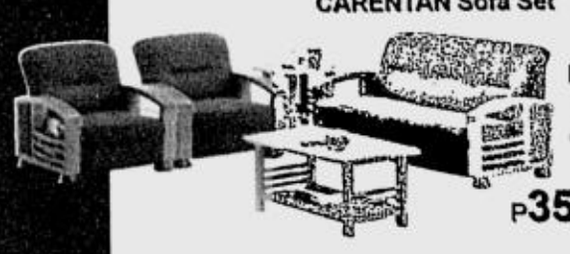

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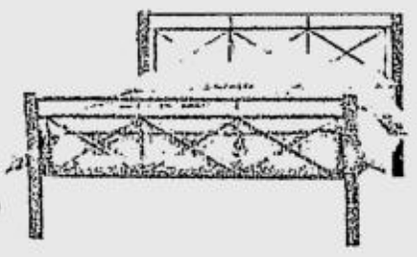

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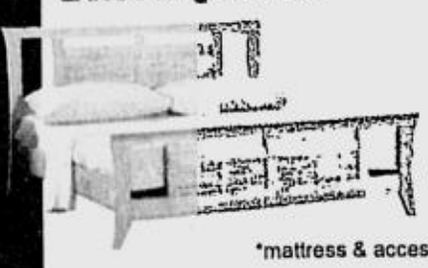

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NTC says '04 revenue hit just below ₱1.4B

BY Clarissa S. Batino

THE NATIONAL Telecommunications Commission generated close to P1.4 billion in revenues this year out of fees and charges collected from phone, media and cable companies, according to officials.

NTC chair Ronald Solis said the agency's revenue this year was lower than the P1.8 billion collected in 2003.

He said the regulator booked about P500 million in one-time collection from Globe Telecom Inc. for unpaid dues.

"As of end-September, the NTC has already raised about P1.2 billion from fees and charges," said Solis. "By the end of the year, I think we would have collected slightly below P1.4 billion."

The NTC chief said the budget department had tasked it to collect P1.44 billion this year.

Congress had approved a budget of P149 million for the NTC in 2005, Solis said. This was about P25 million more than this year's allocation.

"We have explained to Congress that last year, we realized a windfall profit of about P500 million which was non-recurring," said Solis. "It arose from collections of past due from Globe."

The NTC's collection next year should improve with plans to impose higher fees and charges. The agency also introduced a new regulatory requirement for cellular retail and repair shops.

Solis said the Commission also wanted to change the basis of the collection of spectrum users fee imposed on telecom firms for the use of radio frequencies. The spectrum fee comprises the bulk of the NTC's collection.

Of the P395.4 million in service income during the first half, nearly P381 million came from spectrum users' fee or what the NTC collects from telecom companies for use of certain radio frequencies.

Starting January, the NTC would be collecting additional fees from the registration of cellular retailers and repair shops. Solis said that as a result of the new policy the NTC each year would earn an additional P60 million.

"There are about 15,000 shops within the NCR so if we collect annual fees of about P2,000, then we may collect about P30 million," said Solis. "If we include all these mobile phone shops, then maybe we would earn about P60 million a year."

Regulatory fees contributed P8.3 million during the first half.

The NTC is pressing the collection of P1.3 billion in overdue regulatory fees from Piltel from 1997 to September 2004.

Solis said the Commission would soon resolve the issue of unpaid fees and conflicting interpretation of the NTC regulation on these fees.

Garments exports barely up at 0.07%

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE LOCAL garments export industry is performing as expected and well prepared for the removal of the global quota system, according to the Garments and Textiles Export Board.

Serafin Juliano, GTEB executive director, said that as of Dec. 14, export receipts reached $2.628 billion and barely grew at 0.07 percent against $2.626 billion in the same period in 2003.

Juliano said that they expected this year's trade to be "in parity with export receipts for 2003."

He had earlier said there were indications that the industry had performed better than expected.

The official belied concerns from certain segments of the industry that the abolition of quotas meant closure of local garments businesses.

"That sentiment is coming from those who are bound to fail because they cannot rise to the challenges of greater competition," he said. "Actually, the local industry has had significant gains in the transition toward a quota-free world market."

Juliano said that since the (garments and textiles) industry transformation plan was launched in 2002, the net investments of new companies had reached P1.04 billion.

He said that during the period, 388 new manufacturing facilities started business while 269 factories were forced to shut down.

At the same time, 44,031 new jobs were created as against the 42,128 jobs lost.

"That means a net gain of 119 new factories and 1,903 new jobs," Juliano said. "Overall, the situation is actually improving rather than worsening."

According to Juliano, as the local industry undergoes transition, there will be closures and consolidations—but the result will always be a net gain.

As of Dec. 14, exports to the United States amounted to $1.85 billion or 70.5 percent of total exports. This means a decline of 2.6 percent from $1.9 billion posted a year.

Exports to the European Union went up 16 percent to $401.6 million from $346.5 million. This accounted for 15.3 percent of all garment exports.

For CAP, things are looking up

THINGS may be looking up for the pre-need industry leader College Assurance Plan (CAP).

During a congressional hearing, several legislators were able to grasp the bigger picture that pre-need companies such as CAP offered valuable and essential services that the state was in no position to provide.

The CAP and the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) had been invited to present their respective positions before the House committee on banks and financial intermediaries chaired by Rep. Jaime Lopez.

The session was called to investigate the problems of CAP.

During the hearing, Rep. Jacinto Paras asked Fe Barin, SEC chair, why the regulatory body refused to renew CAP's license to sell new plans, seriously stifling the pre-need firm's cash flow, and upsetting the company's operations in recent days.

"Your mandate," Paras told Barin, "is to regulate and not kill a viable industry that has provided a service which the government is unable to provide because of fiscal constraints."

Paras described as "unreasonable" the SEC's reported delay in renewing CAP's license to sell new plans.

Earlier, a United States-based trust fund was supposed to infuse $300 million of fresh capital into CAP. But the firm held back and waited for CAP to have its dealer's license renewed.

The SEC reportedly refused to renew the license and waited for the pre-need firm to secure new capital.

Barin replied that the SEC did not renew CAP's dealer license because the pre-need firm was not able to submit additional documents.

CAP officials, however, testified that they had complied with all SEC requirements.

Paras later described the impasse between the CAP and SEC as a "chicken and egg situation."

Rep. Butch Pichay suggested to the regulatory body to grant the pre-need firm some leeway to ease CAP's cash flow problems.

Rep. Amang Magsaysay who filed the resolution which initiated the hearings, also urged the SEC to release the funds to CAP.

Magsaysay said that he was also pleased with the management's commitment to honor its obligations to plan holders.

The SEC later allowed CAP to withdraw P110 million from its trust funds to meet current financial obligations.

CAP had insisted that while there had been delays, it had not failed to pay any of the tuition fees due to its plan holders. To date, almost 85,000 student beneficiaries had graduated, with an additional 90,230 scholars currently in college. The CAP had paid out almost P12 billion in tuition fees.

Congressman Harlin Abayon pointed out that CAP had no problems regarding its trust funds and ability to pay plan holders from the time it was founded in 1980.

He said the problems cropped up in 2002 when the SEC adopted a rule that the Actuarial Liability Reserve (ARL)—a mathematical estimate of the plan holder benefits over a period of time—be included in the financial statements of pre-need companies.

"In 2002 to 2004, CAP showed losses because the ARL, which is contingent in nature and may or may not happen, was made to appear in its balance sheet as an actual liability," Abayon said.

CAP officials said that if you were to remove the ARL you would have a net profit of P9 million for the period January to September 2004.

The CAP is now pushing in Congress for the development of a model financial report for pre-need companies that would reflect their actual financial condition in a given year, separating what is contingent from actual liabilities.

Lifting of quotas seen to pull down RP growth

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority (Neda) said the expected slowdown in global demand for electronics next year, plus the impact of the lifting of the quota system for garments might pull down the country's economic growth for 2005 from the target of 5.3 percent.

But the Neda said that the economic risks would not bring down the country's gross domestic product growth to the low of 4.7 percent, as predicted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

"We have to wait for some more data (which we can use) to estimate how much will the decline in demand for IT products affect growth," said Scholastica Cororaton, head of Neda's policy and planning division. "But we believe the forecast of a GDP declining to 4.7 percent next year is too steep."

Cororaton said that when they pegged the GDP growth target for 2005 at 5.3 percent, they had factored in the 10-percent growth in electronics exports which they expected next year.

Cororaton said that they did not anticipate the decline in demand for electronics worldwide.

She said that they would have to recalculate the trade in electronics after the demand was projected to slow down by as much as 25 to 30 percent next year.

Electronics is the country's biggest export earner, accounting for about 70 percent of the total trade earnings.

The garments sector, the country's second largest export earner, is also facing a challenging year ahead as the quota regime in the international market will be lifted in January.

The country benefited from the quota regime because it gave the Philippines assured markets abroad. With the phaseout of the quota system, the Philippines will have to contend with other exporting countries like China.

But Cororaton said the Garments and Textile Export Board (GTEB), the agency responsible for the administration of quotas for Filipino garments exporters, has begun programs that will prepare the local garments industry for the tough year ahead.

The GTEB has started programs that will teach garments makers to diversify their products to include more high-end clothing. This way, the Philippines can avoid steep competition with China, which is known as a mass producer of cheap clothing.

While the country may suffer a blow from a decline in export earnings, growth prospects for next year remain bright, Cororaton said.

She cited the billions of pesos in investments that are expected to be poured in for several infrastructure projects next year.

The Neda earlier estimated that P150 billion will be invested next year for infrastructure projects.

Cororaton also said the economy will be boosted next year by investments in the mining sector, after the recent decision of the Supreme Court opening the mining industry to foreign investments.

The Neda estimated the country's mineral deposits potential at P47 trillion, or 10 times the country's annual gross domestic product and 15 times the foreign debt. It said the mining sector has the potential to pour in P1.8 trillion annually to the country's economy.

Now's the best time to buy bank assets, say analysts

NOW IS the best time to buy bank-acquired properties amid aggressive efforts of banks to dispose their non-performing assets, according to officials of a real estate service firm.

Jojo Romarx C. Salas, director of CB Richard Ellis (CBRE) Philippines Inc., said that local banks raised P44.05 billion from the sale of bad assets in the first three quarters of 2004.

"On a retail basis, approximately P2 billion worth of assets—including residential properties—were auctioned off this year," Santos said.

These include assets from the Philippine National Bank, Security Bank, Metrobank, Unionbank, Exportbank, UCPB and Equitable-PCIBank.

"Of the total, CBRE Philippines helped bring over P800 million in sales through 18 auctions this year," Salas said.

Salas cited the advantages in buying bank-acquired assets through public auctions as opposed to negotiated sales and special purpose vehicle auctions and negotiations.

He urged consumers to buy property through retail auctions because this was the venue where prices are realistic, financing was guaranteed, payment terms are long, interest rates are fixed and the properties are ready for use.

Trent Frankum, also a director of CBRE Philippines, said rising demand for office space due to the call center boom have driven malls and industrial buildings to convert into high-technology centers.

Frankum said owners of industrial and commercial buildings were being driven to retrofit and modernize their property to attract information-technology enabled businesses as tenants.

He said the trend was visible mainly in the provinces and cities outside Metro Manila.

"Most demand was driven by the expansion, relocation and new leases from business process outsourcing companies, especially call centers," he said.

Frankum said rents in investment grade offices in major central business districts in Metro Manila should increase by 13 to 15 percent year-on-year.

Also, he said the industrial property market continued to pick up in the third quarter mainly on the expansion activities of BPO firms. *Ronnel W. Domingo*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 23, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	2.95	2.95	2.95	2.95	2,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	28,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	51.5	51.5	51	51.5	1,517,200
China Banking Corp.	575	575	575	575	120
Citystate Savings Bank	17.25	17.25	17.25	17.25	1,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	46	49	46	48.5	91,200
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	340,000
International Exch. Bank	16.75	16.75	16.75	16.75	243,400
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	27	27.5	27	27	99,400
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	13.75	13.75	13.75	13.75	5,000
Security Bank Corp.	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	2,900
Union Bank of the Phil.	23.5	23.5	23.5	23.5	6,300
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	60,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	2485	2485	2480	2480	70
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	100,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	110	110	110	110	50
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1815	1825	1815	1825	1,640
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	18.5	18.5	18.5	18.5	18,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.7	1.74	1.7	1.74	8,691,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	955	985	955	960	14,750
Ipeople Inc.	2.9	3	2.85	3	524,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.044	0.05	0.044	0.048	5,600,000
Ism Communications Corp.	0.033	0.034	0.033	0.034	700,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	39,000
Mla. Broadcasting Co.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	10,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	2.48	2.55	2.48	2.5	7,692,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1315	1340	1315	1320	76,900
Ivantage Corp.	0.69	0.69	0.68	0.68	600,000
Philweb Corp.	0.01	0.011	0.01	0.011	6,200,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	15.75	15.75	15.75	15.75	300
Manila Electric Co. B	25	25	25	25	228,700
Petron Corp.	3.15	3.25	3.15	3.2	3,042,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	56,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	204,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	100,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	50,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	652,000
Union Cement Corp.	1.96	1.98	1.92	1.96	821,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	31	31	30.5	30.5	1,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	28	29	28	29	545,100
San Miguel Corp. A	58	59	58	59	144,900
San Miguel Corp. B	75	75	74	74	9,700
Vitarich Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	1,000,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.005	0.005	0.0048	0.0048	141,000,000
Ayala Corp.	6.5	6.6	6.5	6.5	11,378,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.3	1,216,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1.58	1.58	1.5	1.5	9,000
APC Group Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	1,900,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.68	1.68	1.68	1.68	55,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	16	16	16	16	11,600
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.1	0.105	0.1	0.105	1,450,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	2,810,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	80,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	1,000,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.7	1,361,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	500,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1	1.02	1	1.02	260,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	4.65	4.75	4.65	4.7	667,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	30.5	31	30.5	30.5	475,600
Macroasia Corp.	2.44	2.55	2.4	2.46	5,296,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	1,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.24	1.26	1.24	1.26	2,007,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.33	0.33	0.31	0.32	20,930,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	20,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.145	100,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.83	0.85	0.83	0.85	170,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	500,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.16	0.17	0.16	0.17	140,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	3,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.61	0.61	0.61	0.61	1,470,000
Acesite Phils Hotel Corp.	11	11	11	11	800
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1.08	1.08	1	1.04	3,738,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.57	0.57	0.57	0.57	90,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	830,000
Philippine Racing Club	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	14,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp.(Pdr)	18.75	18.75	18.5	18.75	437,000
Macroasia Corp. Warrants	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	50,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series R	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series S	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,000
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	8.5	9	8.5	8.9	236,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	7	7.1	7	7.1	3,903,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.235	0.235	0.225	0.23	5,820,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.145	0.145	0.135	0.135	1,590,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	850,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.1	1.16	1.1	1.14	8,723,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.51	0.51	0.51	0.51	590,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	40,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.19	0.2	0.19	0.2	120,000
SM Development Corp.	1.4	1.42	1.4	1.42	1,411,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc	7.7	7.8	7.7	7.8	9,641,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.38	0.39	0.38	0.39	100,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	0.4	0.42	0.38	0.4	330,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	84,500,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	3.85	3.85	3.75	3.75	4,000
Benguet Corp. A	3.25	3.4	3.25	3.4	58,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	3.45	3.45	3.45	3.45	3,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.35	0.37	0.34	0.35	62,090,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.45	0.46	0.43	0.43	45,560,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	399,300,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.027	0.027	0.027	0.027	257,400,000
Omico Corp.	0.0046	0.0048	0.0046	0.0048	128,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.67	0.7	0.67	0.69	5,730,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.71	0.75	0.71	0.75	13,780,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.2	0.2	0.19	0.19	800,000
OIL					
Interport Res. B	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	25,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0048	0.0048	0.0048	0.0048	11,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0048	0.0048	0.0048	0.0048	30,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	280,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	2.3	2.34	2.3	2.34	39,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.045	0.055	0.045	0.048	48,900,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	520,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc	2,498,280	93,866,250.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	238,227,350	340,251,055.00
PRO	32,668,000	116,944,060.00
Mining	997,655,000	72,669,900.00
OIL	115,739,000	3,040,230.00
GRAND TOTALS	1,386,807,630	626,791,495.00
	AVERAGES	
Bank & Fin Svc	534.66	UP 7.12
Comm'l & Ind'l	2,790.15	UP 19.21
PRO	680.10	UP 13.27
Mining	2,953.77	DOWN 6.16
OIL	1.96	UP 0.01
SME	100.00	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	1,150.20	UP 3.64
Composite	1,807.49	UP 17.75

NO. OF ADVANCES: 46, NO. OF DECLINES: 24, NO. OF UNCHANGED: 41, NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 111, NO. OF TRADES: 2,790

Congress urged to pass more tax measures

From page B1

The DOF said the passage of the "sin" taxes law was an indication the fiscal reform measures were progressing, but added that the rest of the proposed measures should be passed immediately. The government expects to collect P15 billion in additional revenue a year from the "sin" taxes law.

Other measures still pending in Congress include the rationalization of fiscal incentives, the increase in the value-added tax rate to 12 percent, a simplified net income tax, a lateral attrition for revenue-collection agencies, and a tax amnesty.

Together, these measures are expected to rake in more than P100 billion in additional revenue a year. They are intended to help achieve the government's target of wiping out the budget deficit by 2010, and start easing its debt by then.

The budget deficit stood at P199.9 billion last year, while the national government's debt has already reached P3.73 trillion as of September this year.

BSP to spend $1B for debt service in 2005

From page B1

es on alcohol and cigarettes was passed into law recently and was expected to generate P15 billion in fresh annual revenues.

The lateral attrition bill has also been approved for second reading in the Lower House and is pending in the Senate's committee on ways and means.

The rationalization of fiscal incentives, which is expected to raise P20.5 billion, has been approved on second reading in Congress and is likewise pending in the same Senate committee.

On the other hand, the tax amnesty bill has been approved on third reading in Congress and is likewise pending in the Senate committee. This measure is seen to raise P16.8 billion.

The BSP last resorted to external borrowings in March this year when it accepted a $500-million loan offered by a syndicate of seven foreign banks. Its decision to push through with this fund-raising timely aided the local currency, which had then fallen to a record low of 56.45 to the dollar due to the market's concerns on the country's dwindling GIR.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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Kiss sorrow goodbye

By Marge C. Enriquez

"DON'T GIVE sorrow; don't take sorrow!"

This is a profound twist to the Golden Rule ("Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.") The consequences of being affected by circumstances or by people's misbehavior could be more severe than those of willfully hurting others. Our speech and actions can offend people without our meaning to, but if we are constantly alert, we can take responsibility and change.

.On the other hand, to be on the receiving end makes us more vulnerable. By interpreting the other party's deeds, building a case against them and reliving the hurt, we wallow in sorrow. This drains us of energy and logic and renders us powerless.

Then it takes time for us to be stable again. Rejecting sorrow frees us from being fragile or too sensitive and helps us bury the hatchet so we can start with a clean slate all over again.

This is one of the lessons I learned from an old friend, Karen Coyote, who teaches Raja Yoga meditation in the United States, and who also writes. When I was a graduate student in California, Karen, a holistic health practitioner and nutritionist, introduced me to a vegetarian diet. However, Karen prefers to nourish the soul with gems of wisdom. She once shared her insights on how to not be affected by people or situations in an essay titled, "Don't Take Sorrow."

> In fact, put a stop to all negative feelings by developing a solid sense of your own worth

Important distinction

Making a very important distinction, she explained that pain is a symptom of something that needs healing, and sorrow is an emotional reaction to pain. Sorrow can be caused by loss of face, falling out with a business partner, mistrust after being deceived, a bruised ego, or self-righteous indignation when one is insulted, or the rancor that results from being manipulated.

The root cause of this is a weak spot in one's character, which isn't always easy to admit. Karen said she herself inherited an obscure self-image and tended to be unforgiving of her own flaws.

The worst manifestation of her insecurity was being an easy target for criticism and condemnation.

"Whenever something was done to me from which I took sorrow, I added that to my inner landscape of low self-esteem, for I believed that sorrow was my lot," Karen explained. Yet deeper inside, she adamantly protested that she didn't deserve it.

Although she followed the biblical precept, "As you sow, so shall you reap," she desisted from deliberately offending anyone. However, she silently blamed and cursed the people she thought responsible and wished something awful would happen to them.

"I know that I'm not the only one who does this! How often we [zip up] our lips and yet denounce others in our minds. We accuse and blame through our thoughts while feigning a smile. Or, we write the other person off in our book and gradually pull away from (his or her) company," said Karen. The result is passing judgement unto the person—which is an egoistic and holier-than-thou attitude.

Meanwhile we deny that anything is wrong with us. Karen added, "When even our close relationships aren't working very well, we never consider that our own mental attitude [may have something] to do with it."

Wising up

Karen said she wised up when she read Gary Zukov's groundbreaking book, "The Seat of the Soul," which explains the Golden Rule. In essence, Zukov explains that even the patterns of our thinking and feelings are subtle actions and reactions—and we should also be held responsible for those. That's why we must be careful of our intentions.

Realizing that no one is exempted from this rule, Karen stopped being judgmental, and taught herself not to harbor ill feelings, even for people who have been, to say the least, nasty to her.

"However, I maintain this caution, not out of fear of what others might do to me, but of what I am doing to myself," she noted. Karen discovered that healing occurred only after she developed her strong sense of worth or value as a human being.

She also addressed the common question: "Doesn't the one who hurt me have any responsibility? Do I have to become a martyr? Where's the justice in all this?"

By the inescapable law of cause and effect, people who hurt us are going to receive the fruit of that from someone or somewhere. However, Karen warned, keeping in mind that others should get their retribution is futile. In fact, the ill feelings that we wish on them are going to come back, like a tennis ball, to our court.

Jesus Christ heroically forgave the souls who abused and crucified Him because He knew that people gave sorrow due to their own pain or unfulfilled needs. Karen said we should imbibe that same compassion for people who hurt us: "Let me instead think, 'May they never have to suffer what I am going through right now.'"

Karen advised: "When someone inadvertently does something and you build a case against him or her, don't be the self-appointed judge and jury as well. Learn to see and experience without responding negatively. Never keep remembering the sorrow that occurred in the past. Nurture yourself with positive thoughts and engage in selfless actions."

Not always easy

As the cliché goes, it's easier said than done, especially for people who's made it a habit to wallow in grief or self-pity, or have extreme attachment to past disasters.

"Sensitivity, which reflects an irritable or an easily offended temperament, is rooted in dissatisfaction with the self, in low self-esteem," Karen added. "This sensitivity convinces me that I am a victim, which renders me powerless. Develop a kind and compassionate relationship with yourself, a solid sense of your own value."

At the same time, Karen insisted that one should step on the brakes of unhappy feelings. Instead of dwelling on the pain, she said, affirm a hundred times a day: "I love and value myself."

Look at the past experience objectively as a "gift" with a hidden meaning or, as another author, Mike George calls it, "an unfolding of our personal heritage."

It is beneficial to view the experiences of 2004 as a knowledge resource, which we can use in 2005 to bring us closer to our dreams.

That inner wellspring

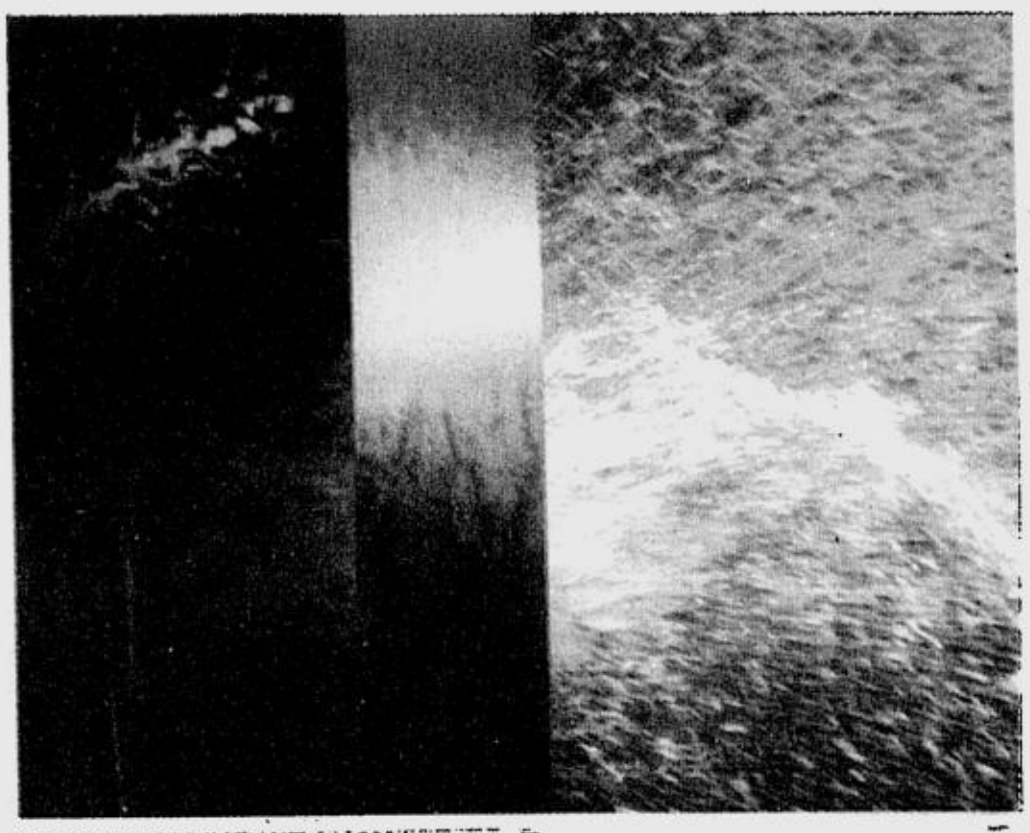
At this writing, I have just come from an atmosphere of fear and commotion. On the way to work, I came upon a car accident on Bagtikan Street in Makati. I saw a lifeless child being carried into a cab while other pedestrians helped another child, who was also presumed dead. A man covered in his own blood got out of another cab. There was wailing and crying as witnesses gave sketchy descriptions of the incident.

As the year ended, untimely deaths came through natural calamities, disease, fires, heinous crimes and accidents. Relatives could not understand why the victims, despite the good deeds they had done, should die so tragically.

In his book, "Discover Inner Peace," Mike George explains how chance can give the illusion of upsetting our dreams or pathways. When such events arise, he says, our capacity to maintain equanimity independently of the fluctuations of life's chance situations can be drastically tested. People don't understand that life is a mesh of cause and effect. Luck and tragedy may seem accidental, but they are actually requisites. Circumstances make us realize the differences between body and spirit. The series of grievous events are not part of a lottery but a system resulting from past actions working in an intricate web which our life unrolls.

For so long, society has indulged in the superficialities of the present, without thinking of future outcomes. Our spirits create events and should take responsibility for them. This is why there is no such thing as a fluke, or chance, or accidents. George says whatever is happening is simply the result of one's previous action from a long-forgotten past.

Life is both predestined and operated by free will. If we do good with honesty and purity of intention, we need not be trapped in the web of cause and effect and become a victim. And for those who have done good, yet seem to have suffered a reversal of fortune, what matters is how much virtue one has acquired. In times of crises, inner wellspring is our insurance from sorrow.



"NIGHTSONGS," Jaime Zobel 2004

Zobel's 'Journey' fetches bliss

This exhibit of photographs exudes an aerial lull, a serenity, and peace beyond understanding

By Leovino Ma. Garcia
Contributor

JAIME ZOBEL'S photographs in "The Journey of Light" fetch bliss and happiness for the viewer who takes time to "dwell" on them. "To dwell," of course, means here "to recollect oneself" in order to become hospitable, permeable to the essential.

The essential is light—a sort of kindness that surrounds and suffuses us, in which we bathe and emerge into being. With this emergence into light, there gradually grows a sense of well-being. One can almost hear Julian of Norwich's reassuring line: "All shall be well and all shall be well." Indeed!

Aerial lull

Zobel's photographs exude an aerial lull, a serenity, and peace beyond understanding such as "Shadow Play I & II" and "Evening Dance I & II." It is a peace that comes from the coupling of head and heart. And yet, this silence is also palpable, as palpable as the sparks of light or sprays of water that seem to fly off from his art works, especially "Nightsongs."

One cannot help but imagine Zobel, developing his photographs in the pitch darkness of a room. The surprise may be that he creates his works, with a computer as accomplice, in a room that is airy and filled with graceful light. After all, as "photographer," he is a drawer, recorder, and writer of light. The Greek term *"graphikos"* refers to a "maker of pictures." This is a term etymologically linked to words ending in a form of *"grapho"* like geography, calligraphy and, obviously, photography. The common meaning of the suffix *"grapho"* is not only "to draw" but "record and write." Zobel faithfully draws, records, and writes the itinerary of light in "The Crossing 2".

How does he do this? What role does the computer play in this creative process? It is best to listen to Zobel himself:

"I compose all my works by myself, using principally my own photographs. I cut, mix and arrange pieces of these photographs in a rather painstaking process until I end up with a composition that pleases me. The collage form composition is done by me, entirely by hand in a manageable-sized hard board. From there, it goes to the computer that simply cleans up my work for slight imperfections, mainly to ensure that the horizontal and vertical lines are straight. I then make a transparency and a CD-ROM that professional printers need to finally print on watercolor paper using the iris or giclee process, or simply on photographic paper.

Great photograph

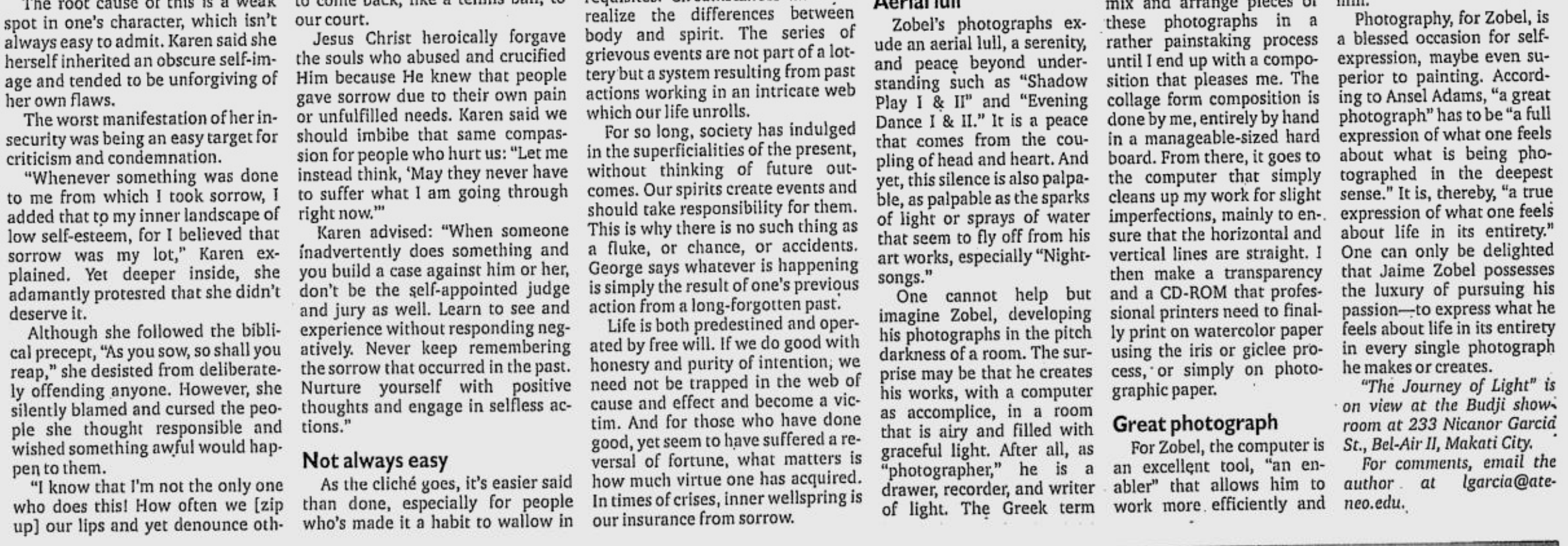
For Zobel, the computer is an excellent tool, "an enabler" that allows him to work more efficiently and come up with excellent results. Nevertheless, the computer remains only a tool. It yearns for the intelligence, feeling, and affection of the artist.

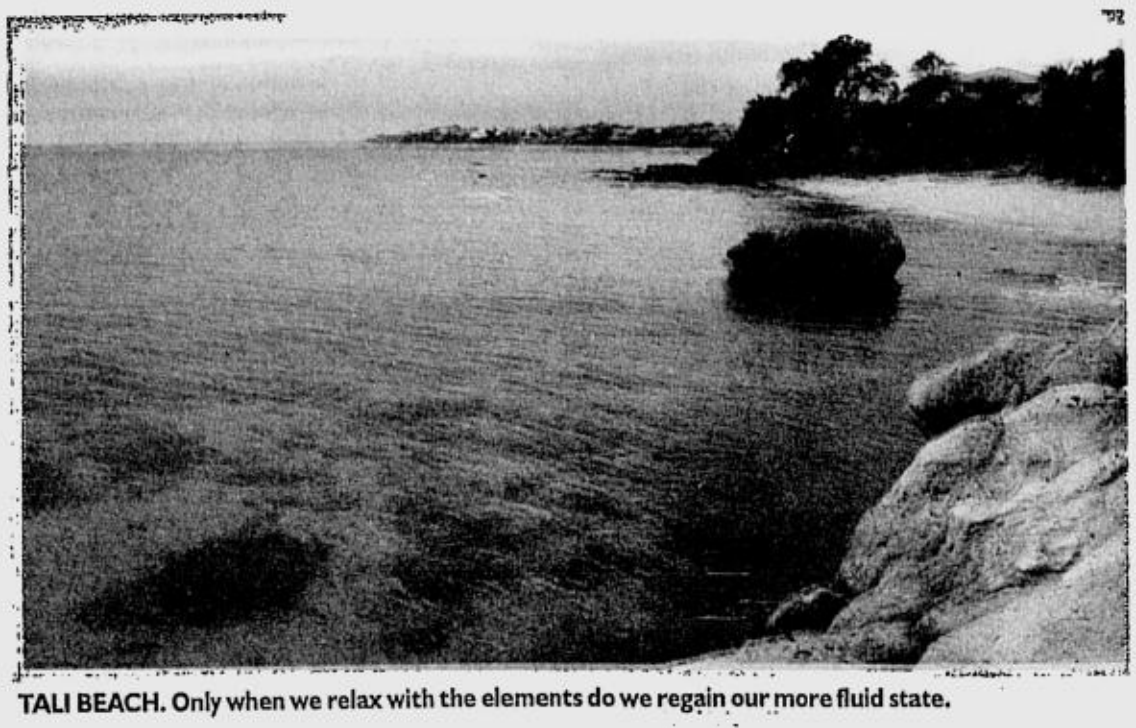
Although there is a sense in which photographs capture reality, we are reminded by Susan Sontag in her illuminating study, "On Photography," that they are also "as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are." Jaime Zobel is not a "taker" but a "maker" of pictures. His photographs excite us because they disclose reality in a new way. Zobel shows us reality in a different light, as it is uniquely experienced by him.

Photography, for Zobel, is a blessed occasion for self-expression, maybe even superior to painting. According to Ansel Adams, "a great photograph" has to be "a full expression of what one feels about what is being photographed in the deepest sense." It is, thereby, "a true expression of what one feels about life in its entirety." One can only be delighted that Jaime Zobel possesses the luxury of pursuing his passion—to express what he feels about life in its entirety in every single photograph he makes or creates.

"The Journey of Light" is on view at the Budji showroom at 233 Nicanor Garcia St., Bel-Air II, Makati City.

For comments, email the author at lgarcia@ateneo.edu.





TALI BEACH. Only when we relax with the elements do we regain our more fluid state.

Tali, Yeah!

By Josemari Ugarte
Contributor

THEY say you've never really lived unless you've lived through a drunken New Year's celebration on the shores of Boracay. But Tali Beach in Batangas has its own signature holiday-making, highlighted by the traditional week-long donkey dance that the locals put together from December 26 to January 2, or thereabouts.

Most of Makati will be in Boracay this yearend, I suspect, because the island becomes a Mecca for city slickers who flock to the island like parrots to party with the locals and get banged, drunk and tanned. Tali, on the other hand, is an exclusive seaside community run by the same families who have been there for generations, and recent migrates who have discovered its tranquil beauty and built their own dream homes along the golden roads. It can get just as wild as Boracay, but not in a general madness, albeit commercial, that permeates throughout the island. In Tali, parties are scattered in several homes that have been notorious for throwing dangerously decadent beachfront bashes.

Tropical fantasy

Driving through the pebbled roads of Tali—Seaside Drive, Cliff Road, Sunset Drive—is a tropical fantasy tour in itself. On one side, there are the vast blue ocean and ripe sunset on the horizon; on the other, there's the most charmingly diverse neighborhood of beachfront homes you will ever encounter. They are beach houses in every shape, size and style; inspired by everything from the Mediterranean to Miami Beach. The older houses, owned by the first settlers on this golden green cove in Nasugbu, were simple two-story Filipino homes made of wood, *nipa*, *cogon* and *capiz*, inspired by the *bahay kubo* and built as open as possible but designed to withstand typhoons. They're all still there, and it is a weird fascination to see them stand next to more modern seafront villas.

During the Christmas holidays, all these exotic beach houses come alive with the sounds of laughter and music and the smoky smell of barbecue pits wafting through the air. Psychedelic beach towels are draped over the balconies and kids in shorts, shades and tank-tops stroll down the roads to the various beaches or cliffs. Rumbling down the roads are 4x4s shuttling residents back and forth: on a quick trip to the *bayan* to pick up more beer, on a drive to neighboring Punta Fuego to socialize with the "blue bloods," or just cruising around the village looking for action. Speedboats and jet-skis are being towed to the marina and off-road motorcycles are rolling around in dust trails.

Although New Year's Eve is always a long night, serious partying in Tali takes place a few nights before, during the Annual Concert Festival, where visitors come by land, sea and air to get drunk and dance the night away in a frenzy of island music in Tali's Main Beach. On that night, the long stone steps that lead down to the beach are lit up with lanterns. Giggling shadows tipsy from after-shower cocktails on balconies or patios or long, breezy verandas walk down the steps and spill into the bubbling cauldron of a crowd that is slowly building up around a stage that faces the dark ocean, dressed up like a Mexican *piñata*.

Say 'hello'

Everybody knows everybody in Tali, so when you walk down those steps and hit the sand, the first thing you do is say, "Hello." It is a deluge of familiar sun-tanned faces, some already drunk and squeezing you with affection. There is a fashion show of the latest and most creative beach wear designs. There is a bar, of course, and drinkers pile through it, buying plastic cups of rum and ice to lug back to their own spots on the beach. There are food stalls selling barbecue and pizza. You can get stoned on the music till your head starts spinning.

The seaside community in Batangas has its own signature holiday-making

The luau-like atmosphere usually gets crazy after midnight. Local reggae band Tropical Depression headlines the show—but by the time a good amount of alcohol has been consumed, the stage becomes open-mike night. Many celebrities, VIPs, politicians, businessmen and other members of Manila's Elite shed their *barongs* and cocktail dresses for *sarongs* and sun dresses, and mingle freely among the youth—which is a rapidly growing demographic in Tali. During this week there are young people everywhere: jet-skiing, boating, scuba-diving, hanging out at the beach, playing volleyball with formidable teams from Maya-Maya and Punta Fuego. It's the same lifestyle as Boracay but with considerably less people, less corporate-sponsored events, and much more privacy and exclusivity. Partly the reason for this is that there are no hotels in Tali, only private homes, and this limits the number of people that go there. It is still a private community, but a rapidly growing one: so many houses have gone up in the last decade and the community has grown bigger and closer to each other. Of course, Tali is not nearly as picturesque as Boracay, but then again it's only a couple of hours away from Manila by car.

The concert is usually held on December 30th, which gives everybody one full day to recover and regenerate for the New Year's Eve party. But by this time, most of the people that turned up for the concert are now driving back to Manila. New Year's Eve parties in Tali take place in different houses, all competing for the best view of the spectacular fireworks display along the bay. The beachfront homes set up arsenals on their cliff gardens and private beaches, then set them off as the year comes to an end, culminating in a massive surge of firepower that lights up the night sky like a roman candle and sends streams of multi-colored lights into the black ocean, showering over the yachts anchored there. This is the pure beauty of this festive night on the beach: with the ocean as canvas, the fireworks become more vivid and alive and symbolic of celebration and fun... and the air is never heavy with smog.

New Year's Eve

On the afternoon of the 31st, much of the community—which includes Europeans, Chinese and many, many *mestizos*—along with a few agnostic stragglers, congregate on the rolling garden of the Ayuyao House for a beautiful sunset Mass. The property is on the western side of the cove, around the cliffs of the massive South Beach-inspired Villaraza House; where sunsets are nothing less than sacred visions, and even more so when they become the backdrop of the final consecration of the year.

It's hard to avoid being overwrought in prose when the place you are writing about is a poem itself—or at least a postcard from a precious past. I consider myself a lame Catholic, but there is something undeniably spiritual about sitting on the soft grass with a breeze blowing in your face and listening to a simple but poignant parable about new beginnings, as the sun sets between two small islands in the silver distance, and the tide rolls slowly back into the sea.

After Mass, the multitudes run back to their homes to start drinking. The objective is to get a powerful year-end booze buzz going by the time midnight rolls along, because once those daddy rockets start blowing up the night sky, the parties accelerate in speed and energy. Almost all conversations are bent one way or the other by this time, and people are laughing and crying the year away, sucking on *torotot* and shoving *watusi* sticks into their cigarettes. I remember one New Year's Eve party when my friend's dad threw a *trianggulo* into the wind, and it flew right back. He was rushed to a clinic in the *bayan*, but he lost an eye. Still the party went on till morning and everybody got blabbering drunk on Blowjobs (an alcoholic concoction).

It is a tradition for many to watch the sunrise. If you can still see at this point, you may actually enjoy it. Many have passed out, and when they wake up, their brains will feel sunburned, too. Hangovers are easier to cure on the beach, though, and with a fresh Bloody Mary and a few laps in the pool, life starts to look pretty good again.

MORE than a top hairdresser, Teng Roma is a savvy businessman.

A pit stop for pampering

Service is the Emphasis in multi-awarded salon

By Harriet Ann Dy
Contributor

REALTOR/housewife Winda Bautista still remembers the time top stylist and businessman Vicente "Teng" Roma would cut her hair in a bathroom.

"When Emphasis salon was still under construction, he worked temporarily out of one of the Rockwell condo model units," she recalls. "I remember getting my hair trimmed in a bathroom because there was a bathtub."

And while Emphasis is undergoing renovations these days—the shift from Asian/Balinese interiors to a Moroccan-inspired one was palpable when ÉLAN dropped by—Bautista now has her hair done regularly in a more placid environment.

Client loyalty

Client loyalty is just one of many reasons that Emphasis has survived, no, thrived, in what has become a hot franchise these days: the business of beauty and wellness.

In the last four years, the boutique salon has been a pampering pit stop for socialites and salaried office girls. The latter, according to Teng, save precious money to get at least an hour of escape from their daily grind.

"Teng really knows how to 'read' his customers," says Bautista of her twice-weekly visits. "I've been going to him since his BCBG days. "I was very satisfied with what he did to my hair then; and I still get a lot of compliment when he does my hair today."

A confidant to his clients and, to this 64-member staff part-beauty guru, part-social director and largely a well-loved big boss, the soft-spoken stylist has thus reigned over the calming oasis this side of Manila.

"This is my home; this is where I entertain friends," he says of the salon. And like a good host, he has run this vanity paradise with a killer mix of talent, propriety, democracy, and excellence in service.

All of which are served with his own eponymous iced coffee and iced tea concoctions to guest/clients.

An advertising executive by training, Teng began his career at the old Rever salon. He became one of the pioneering partners of the former BCBG salon at 6750 before moving on to become managing partner at Emphasis.

Success formula

His formula for success is simple: technical excellence tempered with Asian hospitality. For Teng, who cuts an average of 30 heads a day 24/7—unless he's on his annual holiday—consistency, combined with professionalism, is what fuels loyalty among clients and, therefore, long-term business.

"For me, success is measured in how you serve your clients—whether they drive up in a Jaguar or take the bus," he says. "We're not elitist at all; there's no class distinction here."

Although he is known as the magic hands behind many of Manila's so-called "crowned heads," going the extra mile is almost instinctive, whether the client is paparazzi fodder or hoi polloi.

"I remember one time I wasn't comfortable with what a stylist was doing to my hair," recalls Bautista. "Teng was walking by and I called him. He immediately re-assigned me to Black, who is now my colorist, and asked Danny Katalbas to give me a makeover besides. I really appreciated that."

The numbers speak for themselves: an average of 20 percent growth, year over year, daily appointments booked as early as eight in the morning, and zero percent staff turnover. "We've never had to fire anyone," says Teng. "Some have left yes, but mostly for greener pastures abroad."

Staff perks include a generous pay scheme, trips and trainings here and abroad, plus access to technology transfer from Teng and other senior stylists like Victor Ortega and Danny—no surprise that the salon has also become a fertile breeding ground of in-house talent: Lourd Ryan Ramos, who started as a shampoo person and all-around salon assistant, was part of the Emphasis team that clinched the 2002 Schwarzkopf Salon Group Championship. Other members of the winning team were Danny, Glenn Roxas and Joseph Claravall.

In the same year, Danny also became the L'Oréal Color Trophy champion and Schwarzkopf Color champion, Avant Garde category. In 2003, Emphasis was named Best Salon by Philippine Tatler magazine.

Meanwhile, Geoff Moran, who started as a receptionist, is now a familiar byline in fashion magazines like Metro Society and Philippine Tatler.

"We have no lean season here," says Marge Olives, salon manager. "There are more opportunities for growth, but we just don't have the space."

And although Teng had been adamant against opening branches "because it might affect quality in service," in 2002, Emphasis decided took on the former Rodger Craig salon at the Peninsula and opened Emphasis at the Pen. The largely male-themed place is headed by Mang Ronnie Curacho, christened "barber to the ambassadors".

Not one to be threatened by competition, Teng says other salons have in fact sent their stylists to train with Emphasis as well. "I firmly believe that knowledge is best when shared. If you're good, you're good."

A sweet new touch

... to this quiet neighborhood in Quezon City is a bakery-café called Wheatberry

By Meluchi Rivera
Contributor

A CLEAN, well-lighted place, the way Hemingway put it, is what comes to mind upon seeing Wheatberry, a welcome addition to the neighborhood of Scout Tuazon in Quezon City. The bakery-café with the sweet-sounding name has got residents of the area abuzz since it opened last month.

Whether it is because of the cheery red-and-brown façade, the bright, spacious interiors, or the bread and pastry counters displaying pastry chef Mary Sonia Inducil's creations, Wheatberry manages to attract a steady flow of customers even with no marketing plan.

For the moment, people walk in to try the cakes and pastries, actually Inducil's unique take on the classics. The best-selling chocolate caramel cake has been given a sprinkling of sesame seeds to lend it a nutty flavor, while the choco Bailey and double chocolate cream puffs have Bavarian cream fillings that make them taste lighter than the ordinary cream puffs one finds elsewhere.

Superior version

Another notable confection is the Tutti Frutti chiller cake that arose from Inducil's efforts to make a superior version of that much-loved trifle, the *crema de fruta*. It has assorted fresh fruits atop a vanilla sponge cake with layers of fruit-flavored Bavarian cream and white chocolate ganache.

Wheatberry also offers marbled butter cake, pumpkin walnut cake, two kinds of mousse cakes, mango- and strawberry-topped sponge cakes, caramel cheesecake and cookies and a selection of breads, salads, sandwiches, pizza, pasta and entrees.

The word Wheatberry is not about a kind of berry but is the name for a whole kernel of wheat, Inducil explains. The name reveals her own partiality to bread, and she takes great pride in the store's baguettes, brioches, rolls, large *putok* pan de sal, among others.

Inducil encouraged this writer to try the pizza and sandwiches, saying it was the best way to appreciate Wheatberry's thin, crisp pizza crust (not for sale, though) and the different breads. True enough, the 13-inch *adobo* pizza is a winner, in part because of its generous topping of pork, tomatoes, red onions and mango. An order costs a reasonable P248 and can feed from two to three persons.

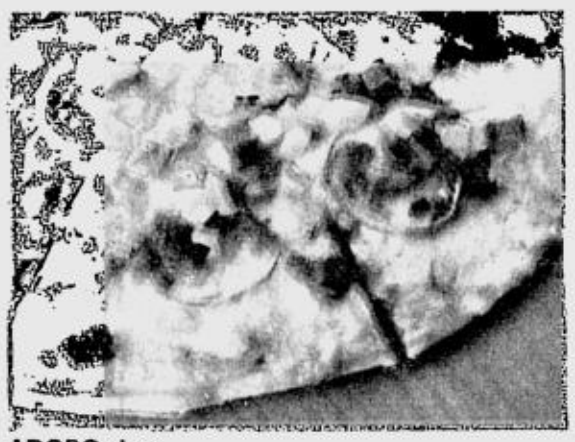
No preservatives

The turkey sandwich (P175) is also worth a return visit. It comes served on slices of foccacia bread with cheese, lettuce, and alfalfa sprouts, plus a side order of fried potatoes with honey mustard dressing. The foccacia bread is oily in a good way, dripping with the olive oil that greases the pans they are baked in.

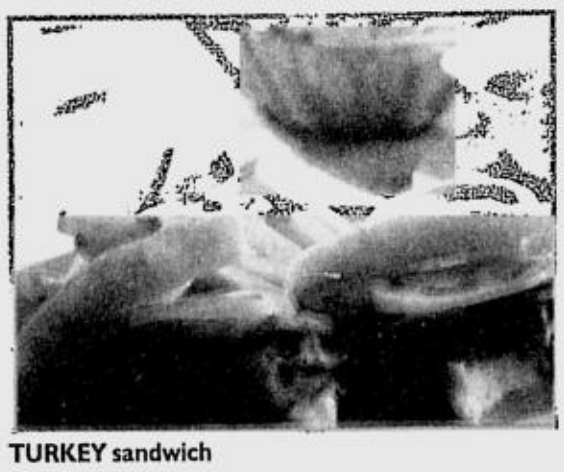
A visit is not complete without sampling a cream puff or two. The two varieties have been pleasing customers with their rich but not cloyingly sweet filling. I prefer the double chocolate, although Inducil says they sell more of the Baileys variety.

She stresses that the store's cakes and pastries do not have preservatives or artiricial flavors and colorings. Breads are baked fresh daily. The surfeit is marked down to 50 percent at 9 p.m.

Wheatberry is at 84 Scout Castor and Scout Tuazon Sts., Quezon City, tel. no. 374-8470.



ADOBO pizza



TURKEY sandwich

VARIETY of pastries

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Venus rocks in 2005

By Georgina C. Solina
Contributor

PUNDITS SAY 2005 is the year we'll all be talking about half a decade from now.

People will realize that only by broadening the intellect within the context of love can intuition be awakened, and social ills healed.

With "integration" as the buzzword, next year will mark the transition wherein the left-brained (masculine and logical) activities will synchronize with the right-brained (feminine and sentient) functions. There will be a strong trend towards spirituality.

The fusion of logic and intuition will produce ideas that will provide people with a higher grasping of truth, further social solidarity, and uplift humanity to a greater measure of enlightenment.

Through the years, I have been studying astrological transits or the passage of planetary energies and how they affect different aspects of our lives. In 2005, Venus will have a profound influence on events because the bombardment of its energies on a monthly basis will be unprecedented. What does an almost daily dose of Venus mean?

Venus is celebrated as the energy of love, truth, beauty, and harmony. Her sisters in other cultures share the same aspects of fertility, food, serpents, rainbows, nurturing, birth, death, rebirth and transformation.

> This planet–celebrated for its energy of love, truth, beauty, and harmony–will have a profound influence on world events

Under her influence, there will be the balance in the science and art of relationships: beginning with ourselves, by integrating all the various facets of our personality and letting them be ruled by the hero or heroine within us. This will expand our sense of relationships with our family, community, other nations and the environment. Knowing our interconnectedness with spirit, matter, and the world enables us to relate things in new ways and debunk long-held beliefs.

Rare spectacle

Last June 8, 2004, Venus used the power of the Sun to beam her energy down upon Earth. In a passage lasting six hours, we were united to witness this rare planetary spectacle.

The highlight of this event showed Venus as a drop on the edge of the Sun. Is this her cleansing tear? Christian visionaries have seen apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary as shedding the same cleansing tears. Does this mean the escalation of the cleansing process as the world intensifies in materialism and superficiality? (We have until June 6, 2012, or eight years, to assimilate it all.)

In the past months, the country has experienced a slew of cleansing experiences, wrought partly by Venus and man's undoing. Venus is beautiful and powerful though sometimes she can be fierce like Typhoons Unding, Violeta, and Winnie, which caused the catastrophic landslides, washing away villages down below the Sierra Madre ranges of Infanta, Real, Quezon, and Dingalen, Aurora. She can be fierce only when she needs to protect the interest of mankind and to bring about eventual harmony.

Right after the onslaught, the country united as Filipinos responded swiftly with rescue armies bringing bulldozers, picks, spades for digging out those trapped in the mud, aside from bringing relief goods, such as food, water, medicines, blankets. Filipinos were driven to help their hapless fellowmen following the realization of the tremendous scale of Mother Earth's backlash on man's destruction of the environment.

In Venus itself stands a volcano named Maat Mons named after the ancient Egyptian Goddess of Truth and Justice.

Looking back at the previous Venus Passages over the centuries—the dates being 1518, 1526, 1631, 1761, 1769, 1874, 1882, 2004, 2012—there was a thread of communication leading to today's globalization. It will take another article to show how these Venus double transits influenced the great writings of men that led to the Age of Enlightenment in Europe, and eventually to American democracy, which upheld the ideals of liberty and civil rights.

This is of great importance to the Goddess, the equality of men and women. The wars in the Middle East can shed more light on this subject, considering the plight of the women there.

Golden Age

The Venusian transits will cause a planetary awakening in 2005. Such an influence will realign the most progressive of thinkers into a force that will incite the political systems of the world to re-examine their conscience. People will see through lies and deceit so fast, that the "old boy network" will start to erode. The stage is set for those with the noblest intent to bring a new kind of leadership to focus.

A new wave of intellectuals will cry, "I am just plain tired of the secrets, lies and spins that have been fed for so long, and I demand change." Many democratic nations will reread their Constitutions with a new enthusiasm. They will open their eyes to see how many of their basic human rights have been eroded, rousing them to be fearless in correcting mistakes.

Mother Earth as represented by the Goddess Venus will be vindicated at last, her laws of Truth and Justice clarified. It will be first understood by smaller groups that work for change, and this understanding will ripple into a movement of enlightenment that will sweep the world. These groups will attract people of altruism into active service. They will also teach people how to sacrifice their petulant individual concerns in the light of a greater shared goal.

With the powerful energies of Venus and Pluto, the planet of change, there will be more focus on cooperation, tolerance and compassion as the basis of a group enterprise. In this milieu, each individual can succeed and be integrated into the group endeavor where the various different qualities of the group serve as a motivator for mutual inspiration and growth. This would also be one way of addressing violence and corruption in society, which are manifestations of hampered creative potential.

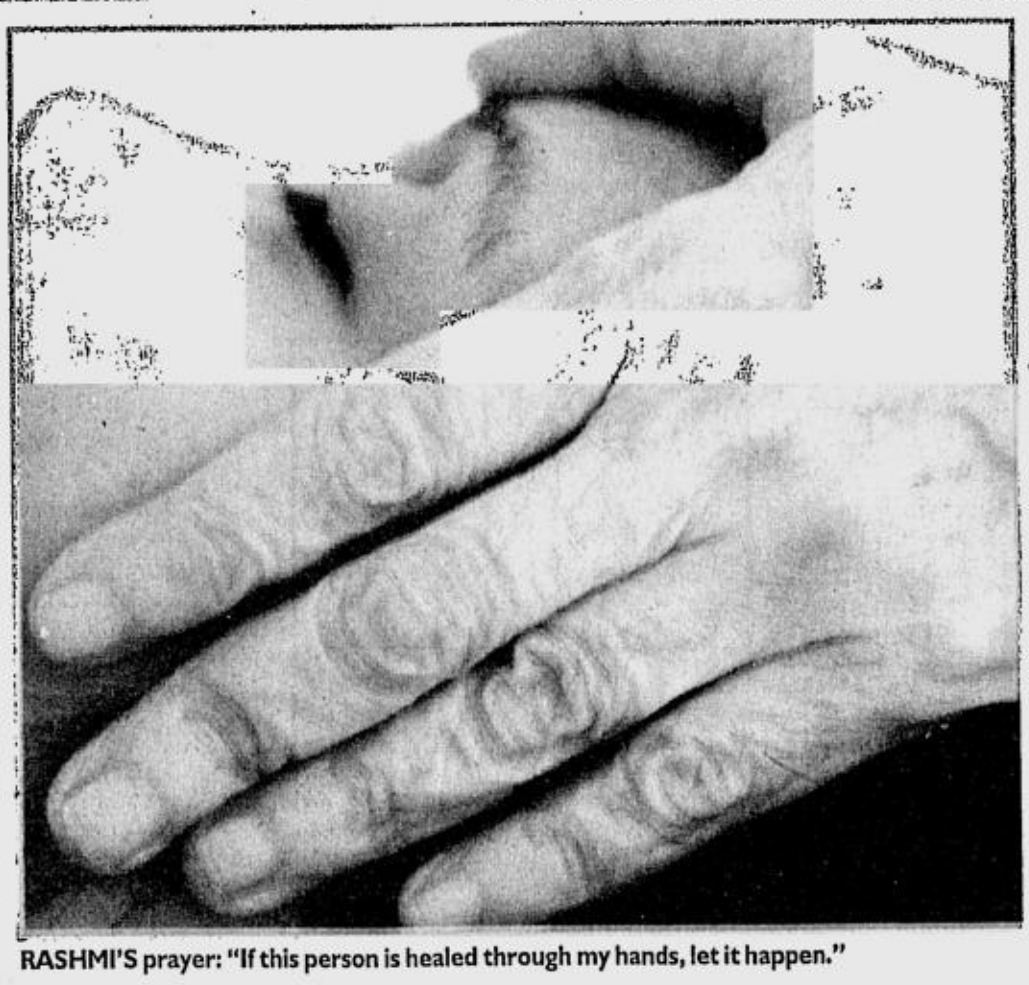
Symbolic

Since it is Christmas, it is also coincidental that Venus is represented by the five-pointed star, symbolic of the elements of matter and spirit. In Christianity, the Star announced the coming of a great spiritual revelation and the coming of a Master. The Star is also a symbol of the Supreme Being as a point of light, radiating peace and love.

The Vedic tradition in India also sees the Venus double transit of June 8, 2004 as the turning point which will announce the start of the Golden Age coming to fruition in the next Venus transit on June 6, 2012.

With a barrage of Venus energies in 2005, the religions of the world will be in for a bit of an upset. In the early part of the year, people will renew their search for the Creator. Community churches will sprout like wildflowers, ministering to the needs of people. Those who have been in denial will finally move towards forgetting the dogma of a vengeful God. They will recognize God as Light, the Source of spiritual knowledge. His love will inspire them to transform.

For feedback, write to: solhaus@mindgate.net.

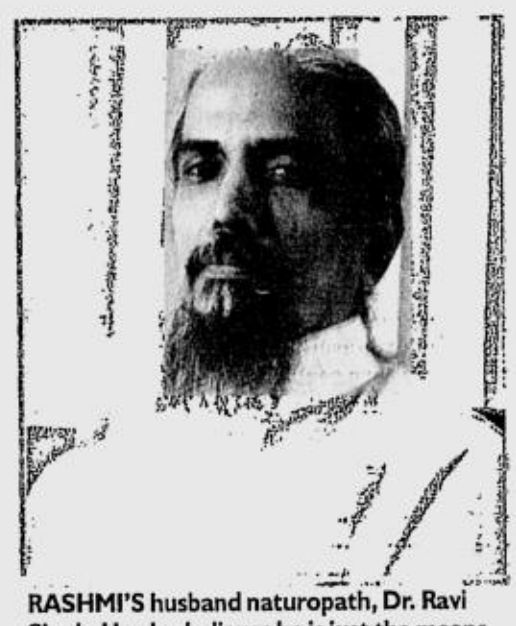


RASHMI'S prayer: "If this person is healed through my hands, let it happen."

TURKISH bath opens pores and detoxifies while the head is kept cool.

THE DANCE of water in the fountain is an imagery for the happy state of being.

RASHMI Singh. "We can't change your life, but we will guide you, should you decide to make important changes."



RASHMI'S husband naturopath, Dr. Ravi Singh. He also believes he is just the means for healing to take place.

NAMASTE chair, made from fiberglass and copperleaf, respectfully welcomes those who sit in it.

Cleansing toward a calm new age

By Angela Blardony Ureta
Contributor
Photos by Jay Javier

WE LIVE in a country that is considered second most polluted in the world in terms of air quality. This means we ingest toxins with every single breath we take. And if we add the impurities found in our "potable" water, the pesticides present in our "fresh" fruits and vegetables, plus the antibiotics and growth boosters forced into animals bred as meat, the very food we consume become the very sources of our illness.

Small wonder then, that all sorts of new viral strains and attacks on our immune system have given rise to diseases that were non-existent in previous generations, not to mention the emergence of stress-related conditions that have become commonplace in this 24/7 lifestyle. Despite the advances in science and medicine, we exist in a physical environment that hastens mortality and we wonder: does healthful living stand a fighting chance?

Commitment

"Yes, but you have to be committed to making responsible lifestyle changes," says Dr. Rashmi Tolentino-Singh, a naturopathic physician, yoga teacher and healer who, together with her husband, Ravi, have been helping individuals find their way to healthful living through their wholistic wellness center, Ra Kendra.

According to Dr. Singh, Ra Kendra (Sanskrit for "center of Light") is dedicated to manifesting a vision of the world in which all beings "live together in the spirit of goodwill and harmony as they joyfully and creatively unfold their wholeness."

Both doctors were trained in naturopathy, Ayurveda, Chinese and Thai traditional massage, and other practices of Ancient Wisdom Teaching. They established Ra Kendra as a center for learning and fellowship in Jaipur, India, in 1975, before moving to Munich, Germany three years later. In 1981, the couple decided to return to the Philippines, where the center has been based since.

"It was not easy to establish Ra Kendra in Manila at a time when most Filipinos still thought of yoga as some sort of cult practice," says Rashmi, smiling amusedly at the recollection. There they were—hippies from the '70s teaching about love and beauty to the emerging yuppie generation of the '80s who walked the edge of cutthroat ambition and material success. But if there was something that remained universal and unchanging, whatever the prevailing lifestyle trend, it was the presence of pain and the desire to eliminate it.

"Pain is always present whether in the physical, mental or spiritual form," she explains, "and people who are in pain are willing to do anything and everything to alleviate it—including making important changes in their life."

Willingness to change

Change is an important keyword for anyone who intends to find comfort in Ra Kendra's wellness programs. All clients have to begin with a cleansing program that heals and rejuvenates, because Rashmi maintains that there can be no healing without first detoxifying.

"The primary concern is to get rid of the toxins one has accumulated over the years and to bring his body to a state where it is strong enough to assimilate what is good in everything it consumes."

After the initial consultation and health reading, each patient is given his own nutritional and therapeutic program that will include lifestyle counseling, supervised fasts, hydrotherapy, earth packs and other naturopathic, yogic and Ayurvedic applications. It is in this intensive cleansing, healing and revitalizing program that discipline, commitment and personal responsibility are vital to achieving the goal of total health and well-being.

"The first question I always ask is: 'What do you think can I do for you?' We see where the patient is and where we can work together," says Rashmi. "We take out every possible excuse of 'I can't' because entering our program demands knowing one's self and why he is doing this. We are very strict about personal commitment. You can't come here just when you feel like it then grumble if nothing is happening. You commit at least one month, coming here three times a week for a total of 12 sessions. It is also a proactive program where the patient has to do his share by taking care of his food, of his living habits. I can always tell if a patient is cheating on his program because the body cannot lie; it will always show."

> Ra Kendra center is dedicated to 'manifesting a vision of the world in which all beings joyfully unfold their wholeness and live in harmony'

Within a month, she says, a patient can already make up his mind on whether he really wants to change his life. "If not, then we don't have to waste each other's time."

From experience, many patients have no problem surviving the first 12 sessions, especially since they are closely supervised. It is sustaining that lifestyle change that is the bigger challenge. In which case, Rashmi advises patients to look deeply into their hearts and create a clear vision of how they really want their life to be. "The desire to change begins with what is in the heart. We can accommodate and guide them as far as they want to go, but they have to know why. Your nature cannot be destroyed. If you don't even see that, then you will be sick for a very long time!"

Kicking habits

The cleansing program (which costs around P15,000 for 12 sessions) is recommended once or twice a year, while patients with severe problems may be required to undergo a series of programs at a time. Ra Kendra has seen an endless procession enter its welcoming portals, people carrying bundles of physical and emotional ailments that run from tension headaches, insomnia and back pains, to cases of cancer, diabetes and other so-called "killer" diseases. Whatever the condition, Rashmi's immediate concern is to wean the patient away from his or her "toxic lifestyle."

"A lifestyle or certain living habits can cause one's system to generate and accumulate toxicity of varying degrees," she explains. "This could be due to mental, emotional and physical stress, unhealthy food intake, or systemic wear and tear. A toxic situation undermines one's state of wellness due to the resulting energy blockages, clogged passages, malfunction of various organs, and so on. So the discomfort and imbalance one experiences are actually reminders to initiate some improvement and corrective measures in one's present lifestyle."

Aside from the intensive program, Ra Kendra offers other services that help detoxify, relax and rejuvenate mind and body using Ayurvedic applications. These include aromatic hot oil rubs, ozonized steam baths, herbal and floral baths, milk baths, Himalayan salt and ozonized oil baths, mineral packs, massages and polishes, as well as combination packages that can ensure days of sheer comfort and bliss after every session.

Body and soul

For those who want a more in-depth healing of mind, body and spirit, the center also offers various courses and activities that include yoga instruction, weekly collective meditation, naturopathic and yoga therapies, Reiki healing, counseling, as well as organized trips to spiritual and cultural centers in the Himalayas and other "power seats" all over the world.

One thing a patient has to understand, she says, is that the body should be seen as a gift and not a burden. "The body is the gross part of our being and the soul is the subtle aspect, but they are not separate—they are one. The body is our means of expressing ourselves in the world, the vehicle for creating. For as long as we are in the body, the better we maintain it, the more it becomes functional for us. We can use it to serve others and to serve our purpose in life. Let's stop making our body the whipping boy of our emotions."

And in over 30 years of healing as her life's work, Rashmi maintains that Ra Kendra promotes full cooperation of all systems and modalities. "Every method has its purpose and we are all working as one because we share the vision of improving the quality of life."

Ra Kendra is at the Deck (D2) of Medical Plaza Makati, Amorsolo corner Dela Rosa streets, Legaspi Village, Makati City. For inquiries, please call 843-6142, 824-1882 or 817-6484.

Relaxation...

... it can get stressful. Lavender or chamomile candles? A one and half-hour spa or a two-hour spa? The Natural Makiling Facial or the Natural Facial in Mt. Makiling? In the pursuit of peace and quiet, the pursuit can really get tiring. What to do? Here are some stress-free ways to relax.

Breathe deeply. Inhale. Exhale. Inhale. Exhale. Inhale. Exhale. Hope that gave you a few moments of relaxation. You see, breathing deeply can be one of the fastest and easiest ways to relax. You can do it in the office. In the cab. Even while you're in a meeting.

figure 1 Inhale

figure 2 Exhale

Take a nap. In the office. In a cab. But not in a meeting please. A 5-minute nap can do wonders for your body and spirit.

Read something light. Read about some tropical paradise. Once your mind relaxes, the body is sure to follow.

Listen to music. Whether it's someone playing the flute or someone playing his heart out on an electric guitar, the more appealing the music is to you, the more it will release your tension from work.

Now stretch. Get out of your chair and find some floor space. Touch your toes. Flex those calves. Make little circles with your arms. Since the muscles of the body are interconnected, stretching makes the whole body feel relaxed.

Drink something soothing. Water, even iced tea, provides that refreshing and soothing effect that goes deep down in the body.

Take a walk. Around the block. In the park. That fresh air can do you good. But if you're in the office and can't leave the building, walking around can provide that welcome break.

Take time out for personal reasons. Text a friend to say hi. Read an email from a loved one. Sketch an idea. Form something out of a cloud. This little distraction is the kind of break to relax the mind. You see, relaxing can be...relaxing. You can do these things wherever and whenever. And best of all, they're free.

Relaxing getaways...

...anywhere more than a hundred feet from your desk would be a good start. It could be a park. A quiet corner in a bookstore. And if by chance you have a jet at your disposal, people say Bora-Bora is nice this time of year.

But if all you've got are a few hundred bucks at your disposal, there are some gems in the metropolis worth visiting.

Let's start with the malls. Yup, you read it right. Malling for most people can be relaxing. The scent of freshly baked croissants, a leather goods store, can be as relaxing as a lit vanilla candle.

Visit art galleries. Landscapes remain to be a popular subject among artists. Look at the paintings. Appreciate its beauty. The serene lake. The calm skies. Your busy life should imitate art.

Drop by the old college open grounds. The cool breeze. The nostalgia. Plus the fact you no longer have to cram for an exam, can be quite relaxing.

Go to the movies. *Ahhh*...comfy seats. A constant 24 degrees. Just don't pick a movie about Japanese ghosts, World War II or Japanese ghosts in World War II. Sit back, relax and watch a no-brainer movie.

Surf the Internet. The world wide web is full of sites where you can give your weary mind that much needed break.

Spend an hour in a bookstore. Get a book or a magazine. Pick a quiet corner. Start reading. And since store clerks won't bother you while you're reading, you might actually get to finish that book you're reading. Besides, they're busy returning all those new magazines into their plastic covers.

Visit your garden. Whether it's a large yard or three potted plants that make up your garden, the green colors and the gentle leaves blowing in the wind provide that soothing effect. Plus plants give off that much needed oxygen your body needs.

Now let's try something closer. Like your bed. It's near. It's free. It's yours. It's open 24/7. And since it's December, your arms and feet will instinctively search for those cool spots on the bed. And once they find them, a good sleep is just a few winks away.

You could also try the kitchen. Make yourself a sandwich. Fix yourself a glass of iced tea. Simple things like these provide a pleasant distraction from take-home work or a household chore. The light meal, the cool drink is just what your body needs to calm down from all that work.

So there you go. Relaxing getaways can be near and inexpensive.

Peace on Earth & Sky

The soothing effect of tea.
The refreshing taste of lemon.
Sip in heavenly peace.

Earth & Sky Lemon Iced Tea
Refreshed & Calm

Now available in 45g, 250g, 500g, 750g, and 1 kg foil packs. From *The Coca-Cola Company*

■ Magazine

The Spoken World: Laugh and cry at the year's best quotes

■ World / A7

'Incivility' named year's top word

■ Sports / A23

A happy Christmas for cancer-stricken PBL player

■ Metro / A15

Alert bus driver foils Christmas eve bombing

■ Lifestyle / C1

How Christmas cards revive our forests

Poe's death, funeral break traffic records on INQ7.net

By Javier Vicente D. Rufino
INQ7.net

THE DEATH and funeral of celebrated movie actor and former presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. was a blockbuster event not only on the streets of Manila but also online as overseas Filipinos broke traffic records on INQ7.net.

POE'S/ A6

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Sunday
BALANCED NEWS, FEARL[illegible] VIEWS

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph Sunday, December 26, 2004 ★ 64 pages / 10 sections / Vol. 19 / No. 18 P18

REM ZAMORA

CHRIST CHILD. Residents of Barangay Ilog in Infanta, Quezon, have left everything behind, including the Santo Niño. Infanta was one of the worst hit by two deadly storms.

POPE John Paul II prays during the Christmas Midnight Mass in Saint Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. Braving Parkinson's Disease, the Pope offered a prayer for peace in the Middle East, the birthplace of Jesus. REUTERS

Pope: Troubled world needs message of Jesus

VATICAN CITY—Pope John Paul II told the world in his Christmas message on Saturday that people were yearning for peace everywhere around the globe and expressed particular concern for Iraq, the Middle East and Africa.

"Everywhere peace is needed!" he said in an unsually short "Urbi et Orbi" (To the City and World) message, which he read with difficulty from the steps of St Peter's Basilica.

The Pope, who suffers from Parkinson's Disease and no longer walks, asked the Infant Jesus to encourage attempts to promote dialogue and reconciliation and to sustain peace efforts.

"I think of Africa, of the tragedy of Darfur in Sudan, of the Ivory Coast and the Great Lakes Region. With great apprehension I follow the situation in Iraq. And how can I fail to look with anxious concern, but also invincible confidence, toward that Land of which you are a son?" he said.

Encouraged by chants of "John Paul II, We Love You," he continued with determination to read brief Christmas greetings in 62 languages, including Arabic, Hebrew and others spoken in some of the world's hot spots.

The "Urbi et Orbi" message was heard by thousands of people under umbrellas in a rainy St Peter's Square and watched by tens

POPE/ A6

CPP 'hit list' denounced

Akbayan leaders fear for their lives

By Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.
Senior Desk Editor

INDIVIDUALS and groups listed as "counterrevolutionaries" in a December issue of the official publication of the Communist Party of the Philippines have denounced the roster as a "hit list."

"We're fair game," Walden Bello, a University of the Philippines professor who is on the CPP list, told INQUIRER editors. "We don't think this is an arbitrary listing."

In an open letter to CPP founder Jose Maria Sison on the 36th anniversary of the CPP today, Bello and Akbayan Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales said: "The party which you founded 36 years ago views them as ideological and political enemies—class enemies, as can be 'gleaned from their international links.'"

In its Dec. 7 issue, the Ang Bayan identified the "counterrevolutionaries" in a diagram of individuals and organizations and their links to so-called Trotskyites and social democrats abroad. The diagram was prepared by the CPP's International Department.

"Some personalities involved with some of these groups are already dead, like Popoy Lagman, Romulo Kintanar and Arturo Tabara. Lagman, reportedly—and the latter two admittedly—in the hands of your armed wing, the New People's Army. Another person on the list, Ricardo

CPP/ A4

N. Korea ready for market economy

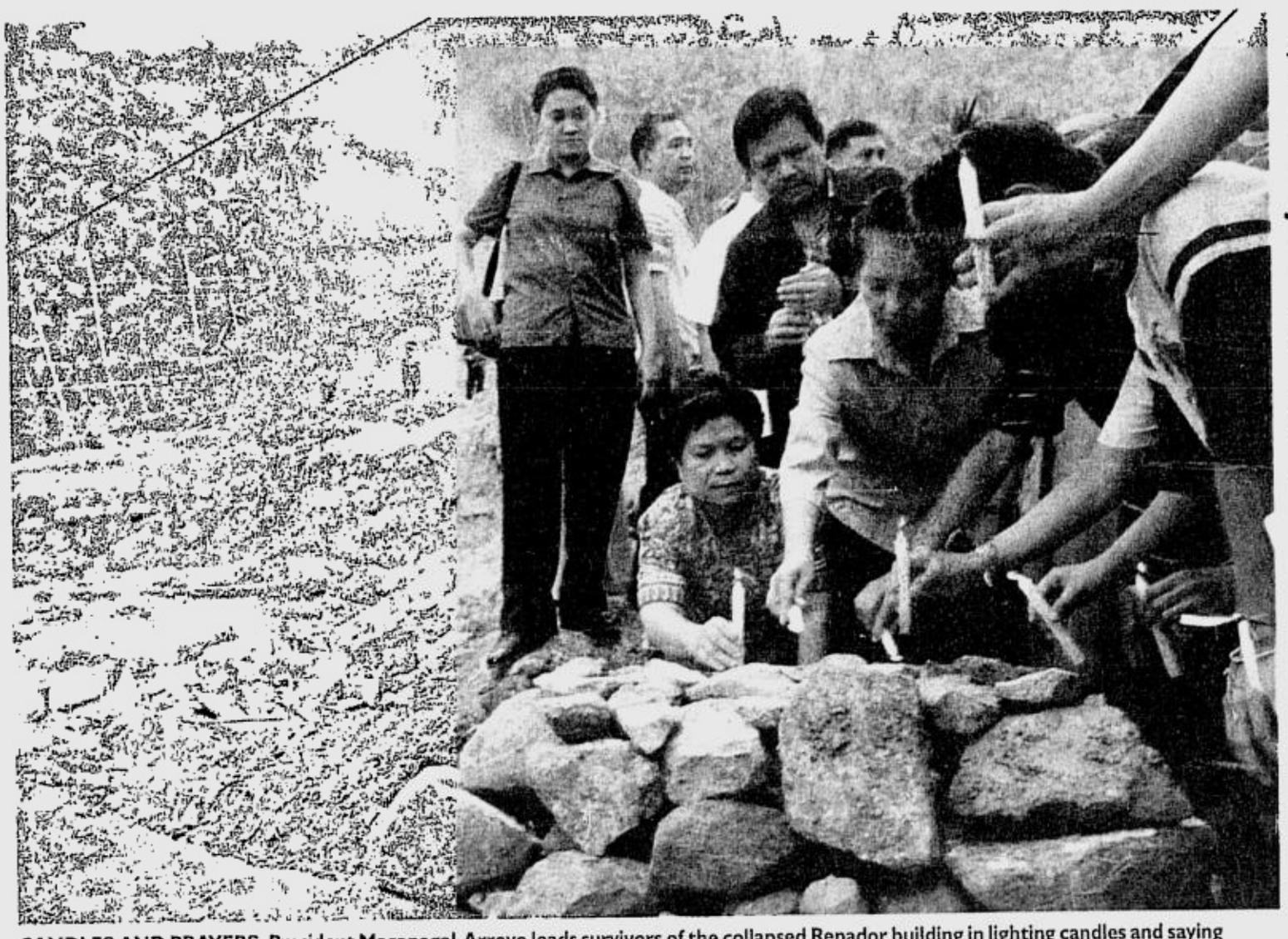
By Ricardo S. Malay
Contributor

PYONGYANG—In a rare indication that it's ready to embrace capitalist reforms, North Korea has said "the world is a market economy" and acknowledged that the Stalinist country may adopt the tectonic shift by socialist countries in Asia and elsewhere to open their economies.

A top official told a visiting Filipino, who holds a key position in the United Nations Development Programme, that Pyongyang could not afford to be left behind as China, Russia and Vietnam race to compete in an increasingly globalized world. But he stressed that they have to proceed cautiously so long as the nuclear issue in the Korean peninsula remains unresolved.

Romeo Garcia, a veteran spe-

N. KOREA/ A4



CANDLES AND PRAYERS. President Macapagal-Arroyo leads survivors of the collapsed Repador building in lighting candles and saying prayers at the makeshift graves in Barangay Tignoan, Real, Quezon, on Saturday. EDWIN BACASMAS

Reds eye Iraq-style weapons

BACOLOD CITY—Communist insurgents yesterday said they were studying how to use weapons similar to the Iraqi insurgents in their armed campaign to seize power.

In a statement issued in this

REDS EYE/ A4

Contraband items become gifts to victims

By Volt Contreras
and Juliet Labog-Javellana

SEIZED contraband became gifts of cheer as the Department of Social Welfare and Development yesterday distributed to typhoon victims in Quezon "Christmas packs" containing, among others, brand-new clothes that had been intercepted from suspected smugglers.

Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman said the Bureau of Customs provided the clothes that formed part of the special relief packages, which also included slippers, candies and typical *noche buena* fare like spaghetti, sauces, canned fruit cocktail and juices.

The BOC has committed up to "10,000 bales" of confiscated garments and blankets worth millions of pesos to the government's relief efforts per orders from President Macapagal-Arroyo, according to Social Welfare Undersecretary Celia Yangco.

About half of that volume has so far been turned over to the DSWD, Yangco said in an interview, adding: "Transporting them is no joke because of the security involved. We know that [the consignees] are still out there and would want to get their hands on the goods."

Soliman, along with the President, spent Christmas Day with the displaced families who also lost loved ones in the collapsed Repador building in Barangay Tignoan, a coastal village in Real, Quezon.

The President arrived by helicopter in Tignoan at around 3:30

CONTRABAND / A2

A YEAR AFTER

Tragedy brings Punta folk even closer

By Leticia M. Subang
Contributor

(Second of two parts)

SAN FRANCISCO, Panaon Island, Southern Leyte—The pace of construction at the relocation site in Barangay Punta is understandably slow.

Those who survived the floods and landslides that killed more than 120 in Punta alone on Dec. 19 last year have to work under the government's "food-for-work" program. But they also have to make some money to send their children back to school and buy basic needs such as medicines.

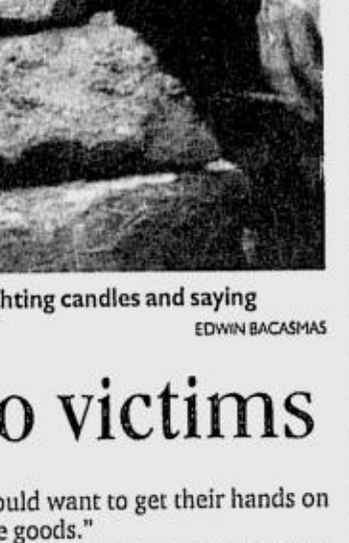
The skilled carpenters who are leading the construction have to take time off to earn a living. It is the women and the youth who are in charge of transporting the filling materials, as well as the water, sand and gravel needed in mixing the cement.

During rainy days, the mud makes work a lot more difficult. And a large portion of the relocation site is dark at night because it has yet to be connected to the local electric cooperative's distribution lines. (The few lights they have are just tapped from the houses near the site.)

But from the banter of the survivors, one can envision what the new village would eventually look like. Their spirit of unity is obvious in the way they proudly recall the times they won most of the contests—the cleanest, the greenest—in the 22 barangays in San Francisco.

Punta is a strip of land at the foot of a mountain along a coast lined by volcanic rocks.

TRAGEDY/ A4



Pinoy machos vain and 'sexy', says poll

Blanche S. Rivera

IT'S BEEN long suspected but now there's proof: Filipino men are so vain.

A survey conducted in six countries in Asia and the United States showed that Filipino men were twice more likely

PINOY/ A6

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2004

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second FRONTPAGE

Text us your feedback: inquirer news name/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: CHONA GALANG, PDI RESEARCH/12/26/04

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Catbalogan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Chavit bawls out Palace official

By Christian V. Esguerra

A FUMING Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson gave a top Malacañang official a dressing-down for allegedly arranging ousted President Joseph Estrada's trip to Hong Kong.

In a meeting in Malacañang early this week, Singson confronted Presidential Chief of Staff Norberto Gonzales in the presence of no less than President Macapagal-Arroyo, according to a highly reliable source who witnessed the confrontation. Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita was also there.

Gonzales had allegedly arranged the meeting to appease the governor who had threatened to withdraw his support for Ms Arroyo if Estrada was allowed to leave.

The source said Singson questioned Gonzales for facilitating the issuance of a passport to Estrada who is scheduled to undergo a knee operation in Hong Kong.

Singson, whose exposé on illegal gambling led to Estrada's downfall in 2001, also disagreed with the decision to allow Estrada to visit Fernando Poe Jr. when the actor was in a coma at St. Luke's Medical Center. That visit was allegedly arranged by National Security Adviser Hermogenes Ebdane Jr.

Gonzales yesterday denied any knowledge of the meeting in Malacañang or that he had arranged it.

"I'm sorry, but let's not talk about (the controversy over Estrada's departure)," he told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

However, Singson confirmed that the meeting did take place and that Ms Arroyo, Gonzales and Ermita were present.

SINGSON

GONZALES

"It's really wrong for the Office of the President to arrange the passport; it should have been the Department of Justice," Singson told the INQUIRER in a phone interview, referring to Gonzales' purported effort.

Singson hurt?

In the meeting, the source said Gonzales denied ever saying that Singson was "hurt" by the Sandiganbayan's decision which allowed Estrada to have his knee operation in Hong Kong.

The governor told the INQUIRER that this was not true. "*Hindi ako nagtatampo! Galit ako!* (I'm not hurt, I'm mad!)," he said.

According to the source, Gonzales assured Singson that Estrada would not escape prosecution.

"They assured me that the prosecution would proceed and would be completed," Singson told the INQUIRER in Filipino. "If it's any consolation, Estrada's trip was shortened from his previous request of about six months."

Still, Singson said he was convinced Estrada would abandon the plunder case pending before the Sandiganbayan and would seek refuge in China, which does not have an extradition treaty with the Philippines.

Estrada is scheduled for medical treatment beginning tomorrow until Jan. 15 next year.

Singson also decried the practice of "double justice," claiming that Malacañang was strict with Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia but lenient with Estrada.

Like Estrada, the general is also accused of amassing illgotten wealth. He is under investigation for unexplained wealth worth at least P43 million.

Erap in a hurry to leave for HK, fears stop order from high court

By Armand N. Nocum and Cynthia D. Balana

OUSTED President Joseph Estrada is in a hurry to leave for Hong Kong because of talk that Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. could issue a 24-hour temporary restraining order to be affirmed by the court in full session on Tuesday.

Already, the former leader failed to get an airline booking on Dec. 26, the new date set by the Sandiganbayan for Estrada to leave for Hong Kong for his knee-replacement operation.

"We have to move fast because of reports that a TRO to be issued by Chief Justice Davide is being worked out," said an Estrada ally who asked not to be named.

Davide could issue a TRO on his own even without the Supreme Court in session. But the TRO would be applicable for only 24 hours, the source added.

The Office of the Ombudsman earlier asked the court to issue a TRO on the Sandiganbayan order allowing Estrada to leave the country. This raised fears that the fallen leader would flee justice.

Estrada and defense lawyers were not available for comment, but the ex-president's son, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, admitted that the issuance of a 24-hour TRO remained a possibility.

"But if they do, they are courting the wrath of the masses," Jinggoy said.

The young senator—Estrada's co-accused in the plunder and perjury charges—said he had already been informed about Davide's power to issue a 24-hour TRO even while the high tribunal was in recess. However, he had not heard of reports that Davide was about to issue a TRO.

ESTRADA

Estrada's spokesperson Didagen Dilangalen raised doubts that Davide had powers to issue a TRO.

"They are exercising a judicial power; the TRO must be approved by the collegial body of the Supreme Court," Dilangalen said.

Still, he said a 24-hour TRO would not keep Estrada from leaving because the Supreme Court will resume session only in January next year.

Scheduled to leave for Hong Kong with Estrada are his wife, Sen. Loi Ejercito, Dilangalen, Estrada's doctor Larry Hocson, and four police escorts.

Jinggoy had asked to accompany his father, but the Sandiganbayan had set a hearing on the matter on Dec. 28.

Meanwhile, Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Satur Ocampo assailed the special treatment accorded by the government to Estrada.

Ocampo said allowing Estrada to leave the country could prejudice his ongoing trial for plunder, a capital and non-bailable offense under Republic Act 7080.

He insisted that Estrada's arthritic knee condition could be treated here by excellent Filipino doctors like his successful eye operation in Makati City.

During the 12th Congress, Bayan Muna had filed three resolutions opposing the granting of any special treatment for the jailed former president which included the special privilege of undergoing medical treatment abroad or merely placing him under house arrest.

Ocampo stressed that the speedy and continuous trial of Estrada was a test case not only of the country's judicial system but also of the political will of President Macapagal-Arroyo to see to it that justice was carried out.

Task Force Tarongoy takes time out for Christmas

BAGHDAD—As Filipinos back home celebrated Christmas yesterday, here in Iraq, Filipino hostage Roberto Tarongoy entered his 55th day of captivity. Like the rest of the Arab world, Team Iraq's Task Force Tarongoy—the people in Baghdad sent to free him—spent the day at work.

"We are sparing no effort and taking no pause to secure the release of Tarongoy," said Team Leader Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Rafael Seguis in a statement. "If that means seeking our contacts on Christmas Day, so be it," he added.

Seguis said that, like most Filipinos all over the world, his team in Baghdad, namely, Charge D'Affaires Ricardo Endaya, Consul Ezzedin Tago and Attachés Angelo Jimenez and Joel Nunag, had a simple and quiet *noche buena* on Christmas Eve.

"No war or calamity can, of course, postpone Christmas. Even soldiers in the battlefield take time out for prayers and simple celebrations," he said.

"We believe that working for the release of Tarongoy even during the holidays is more in keeping with the real spirit of Christmas, which is *damayan* [mutual aid]," he added.

Seguis stressed that their work was just the expression of President Macapagal-Arroyo's commitment not only to Tarongoy and his family but to the millions of overseas Filipino workers all over the world.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo has reiterated that the protection of OFWs is a pillar of Philippine foreign policy.

DAVAO BLAST

US Embassy help sought on 2 Americans

By TJ Burgunio

JUSTICE Secretary Raul Gonzalez has asked the United States Embassy in Manila to help locate two Americans suspected of being involved in the May 2002 bomb explosion in a Davao City hotel so they could face prosecution here.

Gonzalez, in a letter to Ambassador Francis Ricciardone, requested the assistance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Homeland Security in tracking down Michael Meiring and Stephen Hughes, believed to have fled to the US.

"Should both persons be confirmed as to their names, I request that background investigation be conducted by US authorities so that this incident can be properly prosecuted to its conclusion," he said.

Gonzalez said that Meiring, an American citizen born in South Africa, had been tagged as the main suspect in the setting off of a bomb inside his room at the Evergreen Hotel in Davao City on May 16, 2002.

Meiring, whose ID card identified him as a leader of the Moro National Liberation Front's Bangsamoro Armed Forces, "surreptitiously disappeared" after reports claimed he was spirited away by embassy agents from a local hospital, he said.

"Consequently, the efforts of the Philippine government to investigate said incident could not be concluded," Gonzalez said in his letter.

Hughes, for his part, had claimed that he was in Meiring's hotel room 30 minutes before the blast, but did not find any bomb, Gonzalez disclosed.

"If these persons were correctly suspected for acts of terrorism by Philippine authorities, they also pose threats to the United States," the justice secretary added in his letter.

Citing information provided by a media personality in the US, Gonzalez said Meiring had changed his name to Van De Meer and was living in Houston, Texas. The source also said that Hughes was teaching at the North Surry High School in Mount Airy, North Carolina.

"Since both are US citizens, and wanted by the Philippine authorities in connection with the bombing of the Evergreen Hotel in Davao City which clearly appears to be an act of terrorism, I am certain the US government will not tolerate this terrorist act," he said.

Contraband items become gifts to victims

From page A1

p.m. to hear Mass with the families of the more than 1,000 people who died in the series of storms and typhoons that battered Quezon and neighboring provinces early this month.

The four survivors miraculously found alive after 10 days under the rubble of the collapsed building were also present, Assistant Secretary Martin Crisostomo said.

According to Crisostomo, Ms Arroyo met with local officials of the province, military and police upon her arrival at the site of the collapsed building.

He said Ms Arroyo and the four survivors led a ceremony in which candles were lit on a symbolic tombstone. An ecumenical prayer service was also held for those who died in the tragedy.

After the ceremony, Ms Arroyo, Soliman and Cabinet Officer for Provincial Events Conrado Limcaoco distributed the Christmas packs to the calamity victims, Crisostomo said.

He quoted the President as assuring the 1,500 homeless families that they would be provided new housing in a nearby area.

'May Pasko pa ba?'

Reached by phone in Quezon, Soliman conveyed the victims' lingering sense of loss.

"The children here are asking us: '*May Pasko pa po ba* (Is there still a Christmas to celebrate)?'" she said.

Soliman said the ecumenical service at the disaster site could bring "closure" to the Repador incident and the overall calamity that befell the town.

"We give thanks for those who survived; at the same time, we're saying that it's time to move on," she said.

She also said the candies included in the Christmas packs were courtesy of her teenaged children Sandino and Marikit, who accompanied her in the Quezon trip.

Donate, not destroy

The BOC has been ordered to donate seized goods to the typhoon victims instead of destroying them, Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong said earlier.

Under the Tariff and Customs Code, smuggled goods seized by the customs bureau should either be auctioned off or destroyed to keep them from landing in the market. But the BOC had been taking the latter option because it was found that those joining the auctions were also the ones who had imported the stuff.

Amatong said the Department of Finance had temporarily ordered the suspension of the Tariff and Customs ruling that specifies the destruction of contraband.

She said the smuggled goods now in BOC custody included used clothing, stuffed toys, bags and canned goods.

Yangco said that three nights ago, the customs bureau turned over to the DSWD seven container vans of canned luncheon meat seized by anti-smuggling agents.

"But we're still subjecting [the goods] to tests by the Bureau of Food and Drugs to make sure, before we start giving them away," she said.

More hardship

At a press briefing Friday in General Tinio, Nueva Ecija, where she visited areas ravaged by the recent typhoons, Ms Arroyo called on the public to brace for more hardships and sacrifices so the Philippines could "move forward."

She said she was determined to make moves to reverse the economic downtrend "no matter who gets hurt."

Commenting on surveys showing that Filipinos were not happy with the present state of affairs, particularly the economy, Ms Arroyo said what had been happening was a result of decades of too much dependence on foreign debts, which the government was now repaying.

"Many will get angry with me, but if I don't make the right move, nothing will happen. There must be sacrifices for our country to move forward the way our people are expecting it to move," she said.

She urged the people to help the government in its campaign to raise revenues and to end the culture of corruption.

Ms Arroyo also distributed Christmas packs as well as 178 free patents and 300 land certificates, and announced that she was allowing the use of logs retrieved from the floods for building the houses of typhoon victims.

She gave P500,000 for the livelihood projects of 85 families who had heeded the government call to stop illegal logging.

General Tinio is known as "the hotbed of illegal loggers." Government efforts have failed to stop the denudation of more than 50,000 hectares of forest in the Sierra Madre mountain range.

Gov. Tomas Joson III said it was the first time that a President had visited Nueva Ecija on Christmas Eve. *With reports from Michelle V. Remo in Manila; Anselmo Roque, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

DOT: Naia 3 vital to our goals

By Jerome Aning

THE OPENING of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 is vital to the government's goal of attracting more foreign tourists in the next six years, Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano said yesterday.

Durano said tourist arrival rates until 2010 are projected to grow by an average 14.29 percent a year, which is way beyond the existing capacity of the country's existing premier airport.

"It is imperative that our premier airport would have the space for the expected surge in visitor arrivals in the years ahead," he said.

Citing official data, Durano said 86.58 percent or 1.65 million of 1.86 million visitors in January-October this year entered through the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminals 1 and 2.

Twelve percent of the tourists during the period arrived in the country via the other international airports in Cebu (9.27 percent), Davao (0.23 percent), Laoag (1.61 percent), Subic (0.79 percent), Clark (0.09 percent) and General Santos City (0.01 percent).

The country's major seaports—Batangas, Manila, Subic, Cebu and Zamboanga—accounted for a measly 1.42 percent.

AP corrects story on nurses' visas

LOS ANGELES—In a Dec. 10 story about foreign nurses, The Associated Press reported erroneously that new regulations will block them from getting work permits while they wait for permanent residency.

Nurses and certain other workers from the Philippines, India and China who seek to live in the United States after Jan. 1 won't be able to apply for permanent residency based on employment until the State Department determines enough visas have been issued to all those who applied before them.

However, those authorized to work based on pending visa applications will remain eligible to work, said U.S. Citizenship Immigration Services spokeswoman Marie Sebrechts. *AP*

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SMART

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The Fort Open Field

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Bamboo

leads the New Year countdown and kicks off its loudest, grandest party!

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Christian Bautista

Barokya Ni Edgar

Barbie's Cradle

Kapatid

Watch the country's biggest and coolest bands and artists rock on to the New Year absolutely FREE!

But SMART Subscribers who arrive early at the venue get to enjoy FREE tattooing, face painting, or fortune telling as a special treat!

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Join SMART to have a blast in the most awaited New Year's countdown celebration!

I ♥ SMART
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CPP 'hit list' denounced

From page A1

Reyes, is already in your order of battle," Bello and Rosales said.

"Outside of Ric Reyes who currently chairs Akbayan, we, Walden Bello, chair emeritus of Akbayan and Loretta Ann P. Rosales, first Akbayan representative, are also among the individuals listed. Does this mean you intend to kill us one by one?" the two said.

Lagman and Tabara were assassinated on Feb. 6, 2001 and on Sept. 26, 2004, respectively. Ang Bayan identified Lagman as someone from the PMP (Partido ng Manggagawang Pilipino), BMP (Bukluran ng Mangagagawang Pilipino) and Sanlakas, and Tabara was identified with RPM (Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Mangagawa)-Pilipinas.

Besides Bello, Boy Morales and Gani Serrano were tagged as Pop Dem (popular democrats) and part of IPD (Institute for Popular Democracy); Rosales and Reyes of Padayon; Manjette Lopez and Liddy Nakpil of PPD (Partido Proletaryo Demokratiko); Sony Melencio of SPP (Socialist Party of the Philippines); Nilo de la Cruz of RPM/RPA (Revolutionary Proletariat Army)-ABB (Alex Boncayao Brigade); Ike de los Reyes of RPM-Mindanao; and Tito de la Cruz and Caridad Pascual of MLPP (Marxist Leninist Party of the Philippines) and RHB (Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan).

"These are the people who left [the CPP and its allied organizations]," Bello said when he and Rosales visited the INQUIRER on Dec. 15.

But CPP spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal strongly denied the existence of an "NPA hit list."

Figment of imagination

"That supposed NPA hit list was only a product of the malicious figment of imagination of military propagandists. It only aims to besmirch the popular image of the Red fighters from among the masses," Rosal said in a mobile phone interview when asked about the Ang Bayan diagram.

Rosal said the perennial resurrection of the alleged NPA "hit list" was part of the demolition job against the NPA being orchestrated by the military.

He scoffed at some former members of the revolutionary movement, who, according to him, were spreading wild tales on their supposed inclusion on the NPA list of people targeted for assassination.

"Probably, they are now in fear because they have committed crimes against the people and the revolutionary movement," Rosal said. "If they have nothing to fear, then why live in fear?"

Rosal said other people also left the movement, "but since they have done nothing against the movement, they just go on with their lives."

He reiterated that the NPA had nothing to do with the murder of Lagman. "Popoy was killed by his former comrades in the ABB (the former urban unit of the NPA) because of his treachery when he turned himself as partner of Ping (Sen. Panfilo Lacson, a former chief of the Philippine National Police) and Erap (former President Joseph Estrada)," Rosal said.

Deep sadness, anger

Nakpil is also worried of the possible implications of the Ang Bayan diagram.

She said she knew what it means to be labeled "counterrevolutionary" by the CPP.

"Several former leaders accused of being counterrevolutionaries and agents of the state have been killed by the CPP while others are harassed and pursued. But former colleagues are not the only targets—organizers and activists from people's organizations and movements not within the sphere of influence of the CPP are also being threatened and attacked," she said in a statement.

"Many of us who have given our youth and much of the best years of our lives in advancing the national democratic struggle, many of us whose loved ones have died for that struggle, and those of us who dare follow a different path toward revolutionary change witness what the CPP leadership is doing with a mixture of deep sadness, frustration and anger. They are squandering whatever gains and successes achieved in all these decades of struggle," she said.

Nacpil, widow of Lean Alejandro, secretary general of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan when he was assassinated on Sept. 19, 1987 allegedly by government agents, said the CPP accusations and actions "have caused loss of lives and danger to individuals, as well as terrible harm to the socialist cause."

Erroneous information

She said the diagram and an accompanying short article were another pathetic attempt of the CPP to discredit Philippine progressive groups in its effort to project itself as the only true revolutionary movement.

"The article and diagram are based on patently erroneous information, outrageously biased judgements, antiquated analysis and sheer malice. More than pathetic, this is tragic for a movement claiming itself scientific and revolutionary and seeking to be a governing force," she said.

Bello and Rosales said they were puzzled and a little annoyed because "while we were all once national democrats, our movement was part of a much broader based anti-dictatorship united front that sought the end of one-man rule through the ouster of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos."

They noted that social democrats and Trotskyites marched side by side with national democrats, church groups and ordinary citizens who loved the country and wanted an end to the dictatorship. "In the international arena, our combined ranks actively led in strengthening the social movements against the ill effects of globalization on struggling economies of the Third World."

Rosales chairs the committee on human rights in the House of Representatives, while Bello is the recipient of the Right Livelihood Award, also known as the Alternative Noble Prize.

"Against which standards does the national democratic movement judge such efforts as counterrevolutionary?" they asked Sison, who is based in Utrecth, The Netherlands.

Universal human rights

They said Sison would once again stand pat on his claim that he was waging an armed and just war in defense of the Filipino people's national and democratic interests.

"Considering that we are no longer part of your protracted war, does this make us class enemies and fair game as enemy targets? It bothers us that your 36-year-old obsession over armed warfare asserts that all other forms of struggle are inherently inferior and a threat to the primacy of the over-arching goal of a violent upheaval," Bello and Rosales said.

"Even more deadly, it is justified to eliminate such a threat since your concept of revolutionary justice not only excuses but necessitates it."

The Philippine Left is a much, much bigger community than the CPP wants it to be, according to Bello and Rosales.

"We want to impart upon Sison that if the party he founded is truly interested in upholding universal human rights, it has to reassess its role in the progressive movement—as an agent of discourse and peaceful co-existence, not as a fascist harbinger of violence, hatred and murder," they said in the open letter.

Rosales earlier told INQUIRER editors that the CPP was angry at Akbayan because the party-list group, which has won three seats in the House, was taking a role that the CPP thinks it should do alone. "And we're doing it without guns," she said. *With a report form Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Reds eye Iraq-style weapons

From page A1

Western Visayas city ahead of its 36th anniversary today, the Communist Party of the Philippines reiterated its intent to seize power and called on its followers to exploit popular discontent to topple President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The CPP said its forces were growing in size and were getting more organized, adding its guerrilla wing, the New People's Army, was "now trying to develop the ability to make and use the weapons that the Iraqi resistance is now using."

These would include "rocket-propelled grenades, improvised explosive devices, mortars and other close range weapons," the statement said.

It did not say where the rebels would get the capability to make and use such weapons.

The 8,000-member guerrilla force has largely relied on firearms, rifle grenades and other weapons seized from the military, police and civilians as well as improvised land mines and other crude bombs.

The CPP statement said "the revolutionary forces must employ all forms of struggle in ousting the Arroyo regime and accumulating strength thereby."

It suggested exploiting popular sentiment raised by the death earlier this month of top movie star Fernando Poe Jr. who lost to Ms Arroyo in the May 10 presidential election.

Poe, who died after suffering a stroke, had never conceded defeat and charged he was cheated of victory. His funeral last week was one of the largest in the country's recent history.

The CPP also said NPA guerrillas should exploit alleged grumbling within the Armed Forces following charges of corruption against senior and retired military officials.

The communist rebels called off peace talks with Manila in August, accusing the Arroyo administration of not doing enough to persuade the United States and its Western allies to remove them from these governments' lists of foreign terrorist organizations.

Both sides have called unilateral ceasefires covering the Christmas season, but there is no sign peace talks will be resumed. *AFP*

N. Korea ready for market economy

From page A1

cialist overseeing UNDP projects in Asian socialist countries, was told that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (the North's official name) was watching whether the second Bush administration would continue its policy of "hatred and hostility" or adopt a less strident approach to the government of Kim Jong Il.

Washington has aggressively blamed Pyongyang, which is believed to have eight nuclear weapons, for undermining regional stability and condemned it as a "rogue state."

The six-party talks aimed at defusing the tension have been stalled, but North Korea and the United States are expected to resume negotiations in Beijing after the reelected Bush administration decides whether its foreign policy, dominated by neoconservative hawks during the first Bush presidency, will adopt a new tack.

Despite its status as the last bastion of Stalinism in the world, North Korea has made some tentative steps in recent times toward a less rigid state and economy.

Downsizing of personality cult

A visit to Pyongyang reveals a perceptible downsizing of the Kim Jong Il personality cult. Portraits of the 63-year-old leader have vanished from key buildings although his image, along with that of Kim Il Sung, his father and predecessor, still adorns the main halls of a few select offices.

The state media have stopped referring to Kim Jong Il as the "Dear Leader" as they continue to play up his prodigious achievements. In one instance, he was said to have shot a hole in one on his first swing at Pyongyang's only golf course.

At least two special economic zones, inspired by the Chinese models in the 1980s, are operating. But their performance hasn't been rated by independent sources.

On an Air Koryo national flag carrier flight from Beijing, Nelia Sancho and I met a group of Swiss development experts, who said they were contracted to advise the Koreans on minimizing their dependence on agricultural pesticides.

Sancho is the president of the Phillippines-DPRP Friendship Society.

For its part, the UNDP is providing $200,000 in seed money for the production of trendy designed for-export-only jackets by Korean women. If successful, the agency will help finance expansion of the enterprise in other parts of North Korea.

Despite the tiny openings, North Korea remains dirt poor by the standards of East Asian countries. People trudge long distances in the blustery cold due to few public conveyances.

Heavily made-up police

Only the few hotels considered to be world class, such as the 45-story Koryo Hotel, are heated. They offer a few amenities to tourists such as karaoke bars, sauna baths and robe counters designated as "Cloaking." The authorities still thought it necessary to have heavily made-up attractive policewomen direct traffic on largely deserted roads.

During a visit to the National Study Hall, a computerized library-cum-learning center, our guide was reluctant to take us to the cafeteria "where the food may not be of good quality."

To signify it was ready to warm relations with the Philippines, with which it established diplomatic relations in 2001, Vice Chair Jon Yong Jin of the Committee for Cultural Relations With Foreign Countries, toasted President Macapagal-Arroyo's health at a dinner he hosted for Sancho and me. His government was ready to bring North Korean culture, including its famous cold noodles and Pyongyang circus to the Philippines, we were told.

Oh Carol

In a society virulently opposed to the West but which curiously issued Princess Diana postage stamps in the '80s, we found it a tad amusing that the Neil Sedaka hit "Oh Carol" was familiar among many citizens. Three people we met readily obliged us with their full-throated interpretations of the song that was popular in the '60s. A close second was "Love Story."

Our request to see the US spy ship Pueblo was immediately granted. It's now a museum preserved in its original state when captured in North Korean territorial waters in 1968. Our female military guide showed us the bullet-riddled deck, bridge, the high-tech intelligence gear, the quarters, and the galley and mess where three Filipinos served. The 83-men crew, skippered by Commander Lloyd Bucher, who died last year, were released 11 months after signing a confession and President Lyndon Johnson issued an apology to North Korea after initially denying any wrongdoing.

"President Johnson boasted it was the first and last time for the United States to apologize to us. But the Americans had to eat crow when they again apologized after their helicopter was shot down in our territory in 1994," deadpanned our English speaking guide.

With natural disasters, an egregious one-man rule, a society woefully short of basic services defining its identity, North Korea stands today at the crossroads.

If diplomacy and compromise are given the space they deserve in the nuclear issue talks that may well result in a just and lasting accord, it may be the signal North Korea needs to knock history off its course and bring itself to march in step with the rest of East Asia. Otherwise, a poor and hungry isle of humanity with proliferating nukes is a prospect too awesome to contemplate.

Tragedy brings Punta folk even closer

From page A1

There is not much space for gardening and yet every Tuesday before their lives were changed forever, the villagers would bring to town their weekly harvest of vegetables, mostly planted in recycled cans and plastic bags.

Even during the critical months after the landslides, the women revived their potted vegetable gardens around the makeshift shelters.

Beloved nurse

The people of Punta fondly remember Natividad J. Rich, who recently sold all her assets in the United States to retire in her native Maasin City.

Rich herself remembers how she first gained recognition as a newly sworn rural health nurse in the early 1960s by turning Punta into a model pilot rural health unit.

"The people helped me a lot; they were very cooperative," she recalled when she visited San Francisco for my father's 80th birthday in November last year, more than three decades after she left Panaon island.

Rich was our rural health nurse at a time when there was no doctor to provide primary health care to the people of San Francisco. I remember having to take an hour-long ride on a frail motor boat with her just so I, then a 5-year-old, could see a doctor in Maasin in the mainland.

She willingly got up at night to answer calls from ailing villagers, walked mountain trails for hours, and braved the strong waves brought by the *habagat* (southwest monsoon).

For complicated cases, she consulted her brother Gil, who was then working with the province of Southern Leyte as a rural health doctor.

Rich stayed with us for many years. As my surrogate mothers, she and my aunt Corazon wept when they brought me to Davao City, where my parents lived, to start my schooling.

After Rich left for the United States in the mid-1970s, the people she had served missed her greatly. They never forgot her, for there was no other nurse as dedicated and gutsy as she.

Urgent need

The need for reliable health service is as urgent as ever.

The nearest hospital is about two hours away by car (in Sogod) or by pump boat (in Maasin).

It is no wonder that the people welcomed orthopedic surgeon Diego Yuboc when he decided to come home to San Francisco in the late 1980s after years of practice in Mindanao.

With the competent medical services he gave, the people embraced him. He was our town mayor for nine consecutive years until May.

Yuboc's mayor-by-day-doctor-by-night stint required him to convert a small room beside his office into a clinic. There, he would sometimes perform minor operations under the light provided by a small reading lamp.

Abundant help

The survivors are grateful for the help they have received from various groups.

At the height of the crisis, Ormoc residents brought truckloads of rice and sugar. Other donors gave bancas and fishing nets that enabled the fishermen to resume their livelihood, and carpentry tools that proved equally valuable when they started building new homes.

The Salvation Army donated 10 motorized bancas, each of which is now being run by a group of five fishermen.

When we visited the relocation site, Barangay Captain Ricky Subang was supervising the setting up of a decorticating machine. Cocotech is helping the village organize a cooperative that will produce twine and textiles from coconut coir.

Plan International also donated a small truck as part of its project to rehabilitate the areas destroyed by the landslides.

Environmentalists are studying various options, including the propagation of vetiver grass on the mountain slopes to help stabilize the soil, according to my cousin, Jilson Maitim, who has accompanied many of these groups to the numerous landslide areas in Punta, Liloan and San Ricardo.

Relatives now based in the cities and abroad sent cash, which was used to buy food and other necessities.

In one instance, we were able to pool P120,000 from relatives. The money was used to hire extra labor to speed up the construction of the houses and the excavation of the septic tanks.

Improving infrastructure

When the landslides hit on Dec. 19 last year, San Francisco was isolated by the numerous streams that swelled and made the road impassable. My children were then on a vacation, and my cousins had to come in a motor boat from Liloan to collect them.

It was the first time my family decided to spend Christmas in Leyte.

In the past, on good days, we had to negotiate the bumpy, 10-kilometer road linking Liloan and San Francisco for over an hour.

The tragedy must have awakened the consciousness of our national leadership. The roads have since been widened and graded, and the long-delayed concreting of the national road was started by the contractor, Italian-Thai, immediately after the May elections.

The project, expected to be completed in about three years, will link Panaon's four municipalities of Liloan, San Francisco, Pintuyan and San Ricardo.

When President Macapagal-Arroyo visited San Francisco immediately after the landslides, Smart set up a small antenna that was strong enough for people to send and receive text messages on their mobile phones.

As the construction activities went on full swing this year, Smart's facilities were upgraded. Even subscribers of Globe now enjoy a strong signal in areas along the seashore.

With better communication and transport facilities, the people of Panaon are hoping for better economic opportunities.

The island is the take-off point of the roll-on-roll off (ro-ro) ferry service between Leyte and Mindanao. There is now talk of putting up a ferry terminal in San Ricardo on the other end of the island as an alternative to that operating in Liloan, which in turn is linked by a span as long as the Quiapo bridge to mainland Leyte.

If this materializes, then Surigao City in Mindanao will be about an hour-and-a-half away by ro-ro. At least, the much-hyped Strong Republic National Highway is getting to be a reality in our place.

Reunion

On Nov. 4, we gathered once again for the 80th birthday celebration of my father, Dominador.

Like the time when we all came home for my grandfather's 80th birthday in 1976, the whole village took part in preparing for the occasion.

The common questions were: "Will we push through with our reunion in May 2005? Where will we hold it?"

As far as I am concerned, we should, and it does not matter where.

We still have a lot of work to do and we still have to mobilize resources and support. But all of us are looking forward to the completion of the relocation site.

The survivors plan to clean up the now deserted Punta and slowly revive it into the economically productive enclave that it once was.

Our relatives may not be able to live there anymore, but for most of us, Punta is not meant to be abandoned and forgotten.

"We shared so many happy memories there," said my cousin Marilou Maglana, a Davao-based cardiologist, who rushed home to Punta immediately after hearing about the landslides last year.

She had been away for more than 30 years.

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Visionary leaders map the country's future with

Globe PLATINUM

Globe Platinum and ABS-CBN hosted a rare gathering of the country's most influential visionary leaders, who shared their forecast of the nation's standing in the year 2005. Dubbed as the ABS-CBN Forum on the Filipino Future, the affair pooled the expertise of resource persons from the government, private sector, NGOs and the media to discuss the country's current situation and the possible trends in the coming year.

The esteemed group chaired by ABS-CBN CEO Eugenio "Gabby" Lopez III deliberated on a wide range of topics affecting the country's immediate future: the state of governance, management vs. patronage, economic prospects, health, environment and safety, education, the media, youth and population, cultural values, crime, peace and order, countryside development, law and social justice issues.

Participants who provided their insights included Washington SyCip, founder of the SGV accounting firm, and SGV partner Mildred Ramos; Rep. Joey Salceda of Albay, head of the House Committee on Economic Affairs; Jaime Laya, head of the accounting firm Laya Managhaya and culture sector manager; Gov. Grace Padaca, a non-traditional politician in Isabela; Undersecretary Mike Luz of the Dept. of Education; Ramon Villegas of De La Salle University, a culture sector expert; Eli Pinto Mansor, DTI consultant on export affairs and leader in the international promotion of Filipino design; Aurora Silayan-Go, population and youth affairs activist, Calixto Chikiamco, economist; Dr. Jaime Galvez Tan, of the Philippine General Hospital, health sector activist; Fr. Nilo Tanalega SJ, countryside development activist and head of the Gawad Geny Lopez awards; Melinda Quintos de Jesus, media activist and chair of the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility, Teresita Ang-See, peace and order activist; Dr. Danny Meneses, head of Breast Cancer Network and health and environment activist; and Honorata de Leon Mandilag, environmental consultant. Rep. Neric Acosta of Bukidnon and Mindanao culture leader Edward Iblah Lim also sent their position papers for the forum's discussion.

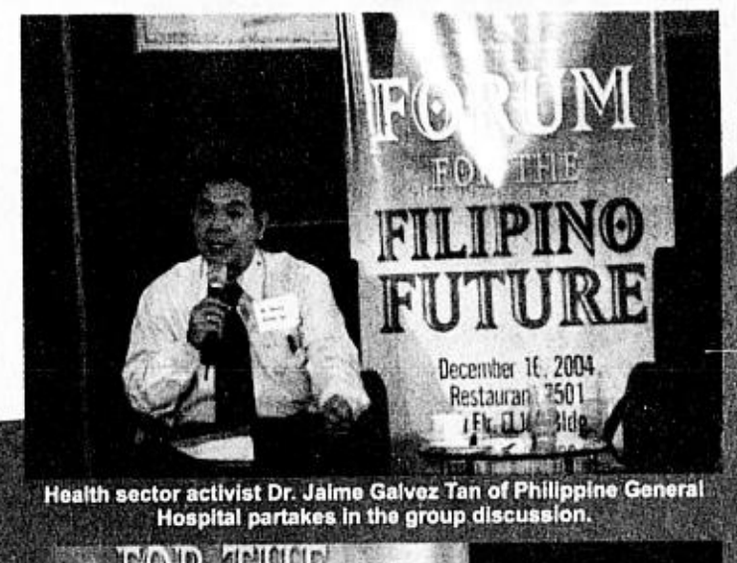
Globe Platinum bore witness to the meeting of minds who prepared a position article based on research data, qualitative perceptions, and the present situation to come up with possible solutions to help alleviate the country's condition. The groups' conclusions will be disseminated to the public through the network's TV and print mediums.

After the taxing brainwork, even the country's greatest minds needed a little relaxation. Globe Platinum and ABS-CBN treated the participants to sumptuous cocktails that helped them unwind while mingling some more with each other. Also helping out to make the forum a success were Globe Solutions, GlobeQuest, ABS-CBN News Channel (ANC) and Metro Magazine who were co-presentors of the said event.

Beyond enriching the lives of people, Globe Platinum actively takes part in steering the nation's future towards a better horizon, a social responsibility that unites with the collective effort of the country's movers and shakers to alleviate the lives of every Filipino. You too can make a change and be part of this respected set. Existing subscribers of any Globe Plan with an average monthly usage of P4,000 and up (exclusive of taxes and adjustments) for the last twelve months and with good credit standing, may upgrade to a Globe Platinum plan. You can also be a Globe Platinum member by getting either a G-Plan or fully consumable G-Flex Plan at P5,000, P7,000, or P10,000 at any Globe Business Center or Hub. Special perks include consumable rates for international roaming and IDD. Get your Globe Platinum membership now and start experiencing a world of exclusive privileges.

Environmental consultant Honorata de Leon Mandilag shares her insights with the group.

Facilitating the forum's discussion is Centre for Alternative Development Initiatives President Nick Perlas.



Health sector activist Dr. Jaime Galvez Tan of Philippine General Hospital partakes in the group discussion.

Population and youth affairs activist Aurora Silayan-Go and economist Calixto Chikiamco intently listen to culture sector expert Ramon Villegas of De La Salle University.

SGV partner Mildred Ramos expresses her views on the topic.

Peace and order activist Teresita Ang-See reacts on the topic being discussed.

Commenting on the points presented is Fr. Nilo Tanalega SJ, countryside development activist.

ABS-CBN Publishing President Ernie Lopez caps the forum's discussion.

Media activist Melinda Quintos de Jesus speaks her mind.

ABS-CBN CEO Gabby Lopez

Aurora Silayan-Go of the Foundation for Adolescent Development

Posing for the camera are ABS-CBN Publishing Marketing Head Phillip Cu-Unjieng, Isabela Governor Grace Padaca, Globe Telecom Head for Broadcast Cathy Salceda, ABS-CBN News Channel's Yvette Novenario and Apa Ongpin of ABS-CBN Publishing.

Unwinding after a successful forum are Globe Telecom Broadcast Head Cathy Salceda and Globe Platinum Head Nonie Busuego.

Pope: Troubled world needs Jesus

From page A1

of millions of others on live television in more than 70 countries, including several predominantly Muslim nations.

Showing the signs of his illness and the weight of his office, the leader of the world's one billion Roman Catholics said the globe was marked by violence and despair in many places.

"Before the crib where you lie helpless, let there be an end to the spread of violence in its many forms, the source of untold suffering," he said, wearing gold-colored vestments.

The 84-year-old Pope's message was the shortest it has ever been in his 27 Christmas seasons as Pontiff—a concession to the illness that makes it difficult for him to speak more than a few sentences at a time.

"Let there be an end to the numerous situations of unrest which risk degenerating into open conflict; let there arise a firm will to seek peaceful solutions, respectful of the legitimate aspirations of individuals and peoples," he said.

A peace punch

The message was only about half as long as it has been in previous years. Still, it packed the type of peace punch that has become a trademark of his papacy.

"You, Prince of true peace, help us to understand that the only way to build peace is to flee in horror from evil, and to pursue goodness with courage and perseverance," he said, "Men and women of good will, of every people on the earth, come with trust to the crib of the saviour!"

It was the second event for the weak Pope in less than 12 hours.

At his Midnight Mass in St Peter's Basilica, he read a brief sermon in which he said the troubled world needed the message of Jesus more than ever.

No longer able to walk, he sat slightly bent on his wheeled throne at the Midnight Mass, attended by representatives of some 150 governments, and appeared very pensive at times.

During the Midnight Mass, Christ's birthplace of Bethlehem was not far from the Pope's mind. One of the Pontiff's prayers was for the Middle East.

"May the Holy Land, dear to the faithful of the three great monotheistic religions, be able to see times of prosperity and peaceful co-existence and reciprocal respect among all those who live there," urged the prayer, read by a German man.

Bethlehem scene

In Bethlehem, pilgrims and a new Palestinian leadership celebrated Christmas in the town of Jesus' birth with prayers for peace on Saturday, lifted by fresh hope following Yasser Arafat's death.

At Midnight Mass, moderate leader Mahmoud Abbas filled the seat which had been left empty for Arafat for three Christmases past because Israel had stopped him from travelling to the West Bank town—accusing him of fomenting bloodshed, a charge he denied.

Welcoming the new leaders, the Latin Patriarch for the Holy Land, a Palestinian, urged all parties to end violence.

"It has lasted too long," Michel Sabbah, Pope John Paul's representative, said in his message. "It is time for Palestine and Israel to defeat the evil of violence and give birth to a society of brothers and sisters in which nobody is subject to another, nobody is occupied by another and nobody threatens the security of another."

Amid the incense and prayers, the silver-haired Abbas in his gray businessman's suit cut a very different figure to Arafat, who favored olive uniforms and a black and white headdress.

Palestine Liberation Organization leader Abbas, who is expected to win an election next month to choose a successor to Arafat, is urging an end to fighting and wants talks with Israel.

"We extend our hand to the Israelis. We want to negotiate, to reach peace—a peace built on justice and right," Abbas told a meeting in Bethlehem on Friday evening.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has also called 2005 a year of opportunity for peace.

Reuters

Mary, Joseph wear waterproof boots

INFANTA, Quezon—The Nativity scene at the cathedral in this storm-ravaged town was reenacted this year with Mary and Joseph wearing waterproof boots.

Joseph carried a spade instead of a staff—a reminder of how the townsfolk have had to dig themselves out of layers of mud brought down by the storms that devastated the area.

Catholics still attended Friday's traditional Christmas Eve Mass in their best clothes even though they had to pick their way to the cathedral, itself only recently dug out of the mud, through muddy streets.

Bishop Rolando Tirona yesterday said the church was trying to keep the Christmas spirit alive although the tragedy was still fresh in everyone's minds.

"What is important for us is to lift the spirit of the people," he told Agence France Presse near the cathedral.

"They are responding beautifully. They come to the Masses with a smile on their faces," he said, pointing at crowds in the church that was dug from the mire by Philippine Navy engineers.

The bishop recalled that he was initially warned no one would come to the Mass. "But the place was packed," he said.

But things are still tough in Infanta and its neighboring coastal towns of Real and General Nakar, which took the brunt of a storm that hit on Nov. 29, followed by typhoon "Yoyong" on Dec. 2.

About 1,800 people were left dead or missing, most of them in the three towns.

Although most roads to the towns have been cleared, electricity has not yet been restored and those lucky enough to still have homes are still clearing out the mud left by the flash floods.

Infanta resident Marife Aumentado, 12, said she was enjoying Christmas even though her family had lost most of its possessions.

No one in the family died, she said as she walked across a sea of mud with her nine-year-old cousin. Best of all, a neighbor gave her a present, a large mud-stained "Hello Kitty" doll.

"I'm very happy I got a doll. It was the only gift I received," she said, smiling.

Bishop Tirona said the Infanta folk had pooled resources to get Christmas presents for the relief workers to show their gratitude for their help.

He had instructed parish priests in the affected towns to include in their usual Christmas ceremonies any rites that might help people deal with the tragedy, he said.

"There are so many who lost not only their homes but their relatives as well. That is the truly sad thing," he said, adding:

"We have met some and we can only condole with them."

Tirona also said he had not met people who lost their faith after the disaster.

Instead, he said, they blamed illegal loggers who allegedly stripped the mountain of forest cover, allowing the deadly landslides to occur.

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Poe's death ...

From page A1

When news broke on Dec. 14 that Poe had succumbed to a massive stroke, the site received 2.2 million page views from 1.5 million unique visitors, its highest-ever one-day record.

The figure surpassed the 2.1 million page views recorded the day after the May 10 elections, when Poe contested President Macapagal-Arroyo's bid for a full six-year term.

In the days immediately after Poe's death, the site averaged 1.7 million page views a day, 70 percent above the site's average site traffic of one million page views a day.

The site received 2 million page views on Dec. 22, the day Poe was buried. From Poe's death to his burial, the site received 17 million page views.

Over 100,000 users also viewed the site's free, live video streaming of Poe's funeral procession and burial as broadcast on GMA Network, video streaming provider Bitstop said.

The number of people who watched Poe's funeral online on streaming video was the highest number of viewers the company had ever recorded on its servers, according to Wilson Chua, Bitstop president.

In contrast, only 23,000 users requested video streaming during the May 2004 elections.

A page view is a request for a single webpage on a given site. The number of page views measures the volume of traffic accessing a certain website. As circulation shows the level of readership of a newspaper, the number of page views indicates how many times a website is being accessed by online users.

A page view is not the same as a hit, a measurement that includes images as well as Web pages.

Previous traffic peaks on INQ7.net, the online news website of GMA-7 and the Philippine Daily Inquirer, were the oath-taking of Ms Arroyo at the height of the Edsa People Power II uprising in January 2001 (1.8 million page views) and the July 2003 Oakwood mutiny (2.6 million page views for a two-day period).

INQ7.net, which operates independently of its two parent companies, sources its news from the Philippine Daily Inquirer and GMA-7, as well as from its in-house breaking news team of editors and reporters. The site also carries a selection of stories from the fortnightly magazine Newsbreak.

Pinoy machos vain ...

From page A1

than their Asian counterparts to value good looks and spend time and money on grooming.

While a considerable number of Asian men felt that looking good was "neither important nor unimportant," 58 percent of Filipino men thought it was "very important," according to the survey conducted by global market research company Synovate Inc.

In the same survey, 48 percent of Filipino males felt they were sexually attractive, coming a close second to Americans, who scored 53 percent.

Only 25 percent of men in Singapore felt they were attractive, 17 percent both in Taiwan and China, 16 percent in Korea, and a mere 12 percent in Hong Kong.

"All this attention to grooming seems to have a positive impact on self-esteem, too, with around half of Filipino males agreeing that they consider themselves sexually attractive. That's double their nearest rivals in the region," Synovate managing director Carole Sarthou said in a statement.

Synovate interviewed 3,000 men aged 15 to 64 through the Global Omnibus telephone survey. The study was conducted among men from various socioeconomic classes in Manila, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Singapore and the United States.

The survey also looked into the motivation behind the men's pursuit of good looks. Surprise, surprise—it was not mainly to impress or attract women.

It was learned that 9 out of 10 Filipino men liked to look good for themselves, with only 5 out of 10 saying they liked to look good for others.

This indicated that Filipinos were more vain than American males, of whom only 76 percent said they liked to look good for themselves. Koreans ranked next to Filipinos in wanting to look good for their own sake.

Despite being the most vain, only 22 percent of Filipino men had a *kikay* [personal effects] kit, while 85 percent of Koreans had one.

The most popular grooming item for Filipino men was the cologne or perfume. Seventy-four percent favored this; 67 percent preferred deodorant; 40 percent, mouthwash; 34 percent, conditioner; 30 percent, gel or mousse; and 21 percent chose shaving cream or lotion.

"The findings have a wide-ranging implication for the marketers of... personal grooming products. Traditionally, marketers have addressed this market by selling to wives, mothers, sisters, girlfriends. Now, they can go directly to the newly minted beautiful male," Sarthou said.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Rumsfeld says US troops in Iraq face bleak new year amid violence

BAGHDAD—A tanker blast killed eight persons and wounded 19 in Baghdad on Christmas Eve as US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld admitted on a surprise visit to troops in Iraq that they faced a bleak New Year.

The truck exploded at 9:30 p.m. in the affluent Baghdad neighborhood of Mansur, said US military spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel James Hutton, adding that the casualty toll might rise as emergency crews sifted the wreckage.

The blast came amid a wave of bombings around the country as insurgents try to derail landmark elections scheduled for next month.

"I don't know if it was a truck bomb or not, but the truck did explode. It's too early too say if it was a suicide attack," Hutton said.

A huge fireball ripped through the area near the Jordanian, Libyan and Moroccan embassies, damaging several homes, witnesses said.

Ambulance sirens wailed and shots rang out in the chaos that erupted after the blast, where a few hours earlier some 80 Christians braved the streets to attend Christmas Eve mass amid fears of sectarian attack.

Chaldean patriarch Emmanuel Delly had ordered that the usual 10 p.m. service be brought forward to 5 p.m., like last year, as Iraq's dwindling Christian community of some 700,000 people braced for the worst.

"Despite the threats, my husband and I have come. I will not let the terrorists intimidate me and make me shirk my religious duties," said Maha, a 50-year-old lawyer, at the heavily guarded Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.

Flying into the country at dawn, Rumsfeld painted a bleak picture of Iraq ahead of the much anticipated Jan. 30 elections.

"All along the way, it is bumpy and it's tough... It is not a smooth, easy path to success, there are setbacks," Rumsfeld told troops at Camp Fallujah outside the rebel stronghold recaptured by the military last month.

"But you will look back when you are about my age and you will be proud."

Rumsfeld's first stop was in the main northern city of Mosul, where a suicide attack on a US army base killed 22 people on Tuesday.

Rumsfeld told troops that although the situation looked "bleak" for US forces in Iraq, they would ultimately prevail over insurgents and be part of something "truly historic." *AFP*

SGT. ANGELA Damon of Buckfield, Maine sings Christmas carols during a midnight Christmas service at FOB Marez in Mosul, Iraq, Dec. 25. AP

US poll-inspired 'incivility' named year's top word

LOS ANGELES—The electoral shorthand for a divided America and the perceived nastiness of the US presidential race generated the defining words and phrases of the year, a website specializing in language said on Friday.

The top phrase of 2004 was "red states/blue states," followed by "moral values" and "two Americas," the website yourDictionary.com said in its annual review of the changing state of the English language.

"Incivility," which shot to prominence to describe what some commentators saw as the unprecedented shrillness of the US political debate, was the year's top word, said Paul J.J. Payack, president of the language website.

"The main event that people were watching across the world in the past year was the US presidential campaign," Payack said. "That had a direct effect on English worldwide."

In assembling its annual list, the website polls a network of linguists and language enthusiasts and tracks how prominently words are used in the media.

In 2003, the roster drew heavily from the Iraq war, including "embedded," as in reporters assigned to accompany troops, and "shock and awe," a term used by US military planners to describe the opening phase of the war.

Other top words for 2004 included "blogosphere," a term for the collective writings of Internet commentators who maintain web logs, and "flip-flop," a charge of inconsistency that hurt Democratic nominee John Kerry.

Technology contributed two of the year's top words. Apple Computer Inc.'s iPod is fast becoming a synonym for digital music, and has even become a verb along the lines of "to Google," the website said.

Meanwhile, 2004 was the year when "IM," or instant messaging via the Internet, "became a way of life, even in the corporate world," it said. *Reuters*

Japan threatens retaliation against North Korea

TOKYO—Japan on Friday threatened retaliation against North Korea such as cutting off economic ties unless the communist state returned Japanese people it has kidnapped or gave a "sincere response" on their fate.

Japan said it would send a "strong protest" to North Korea accusing it of handing over false evidence to prove the deaths of eight Japanese people it abducted during the Cold War.

"We will have to take a serious response this time if North Korea does not sincerely respond," said Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda, the Japanese government spokesperson.

"We strongly demand that North Korea immediately send home the survivors. The Japanese government demands the sincere response of North Korea."

A recent poll found that nearly two-thirds of Japanese people want economic sanctions against North Korea, despite warnings by the communist state that it would consider the move an act of war.

Japan has already suspended food aid to North Korea.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who has taken political risks by trying to engage Pyongyang, called the false evidence submitted by North Korea "extremely regrettable" and refused to rule out sanctions.

"I would like to leave all kinds of options open," Koizumi told reporters.

Koizumi has previously indicated that sanctions—which could take the form of banning remittances by North Koreans in Japan or barring Pyongyang's ships from docking at Japanese ports—would be a last resort.

In a sign that he still favors a cautious approach, Koizumi declined to set a deadline for North Korea to respond to the protest, which will be submitted through diplomats in Beijing.

"We are not thinking about it at present," Koizumi said of imposing a deadline.

Hosoda, asked whether Japan was presenting North Korea with an ultimatum, said: "I don't see it that way." *AFP*

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Asia marks Christmas with prayers, fireworks, fears of terror attacks

SINGAPORE—Indonesia's Christians packed tightly guarded churches to celebrate Christmas on Saturday despite fears of terrorist attacks, while the president of the Philippines appealed for an end to corruption in a seasonal message.

Celebrants from tropical Singapore to the chilly South Korean capital of Seoul prayed, tore open presents and feasted with families. In Australia, revelers partied on Sydney's beaches.

In Indonesia, Christians celebrated Christmas under tight security amid warnings that terrorists linked to al-Qaida planned attacks in the world's most populous Muslim nation.

More than 140,000 police safeguarded embassies, churches, malls and hotels, police said. The faithful, however, shrugged off the warnings and heavy rain to pack churches in the capital, Jakarta. There were no reports of violence.

Soldiers with machine guns guarded Santa Anna Roman Catholic Church in East Jakarta as worshippers passed through metal detectors at the entrance.

Santa Anna was one of 11 churches targeted in bomb attacks across Indonesia on Christmas Eve in 2001, killing 19 people and wounding about 100. The attacks were blamed on Jemaah Islamiyah, a Southeast Asian terror network.

The Christian minorities in Muslim-majority Pakistan and predominantly Buddhist Sri Lanka, where churches have come under attack, also celebrated with police on alert. Authorities also deployed security forces to guard churches in Muslim-dominated Bangladesh. There were no reports of trouble.

In China, Christians held midnight Mass in government-sanctioned churches in Beijing, Shanghai and other major cities, while millions more celebrated in private.

The government says just over 1 percent of Chinese—or about 15 million people—are Christian. But the number is likely much higher because many Christians, risking harassment and detention, worship in unauthorized "house churches." *AP*

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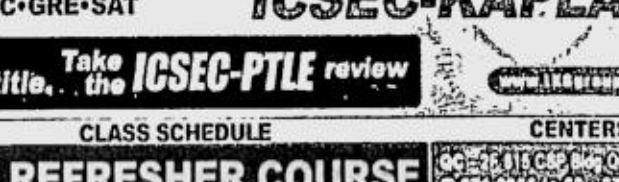

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ISSN 0116-2642 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Vol. 19 No. 18

OPINION

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THE PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER, INC. has its business and editorial offices at
•Chino Roces Ave corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City
•P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City
•Our telephone numbers are 897-8808 connecting all departments
•Editorial Fax 897-4793 / 897-4794 •Advertising 897-4807
•Circulation 527-3342 / 527-3348 / 528-0183 / 528-0186 and 528-0213 / Fax: 528-02-34.

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Publisher ISAGANI YAMBOT
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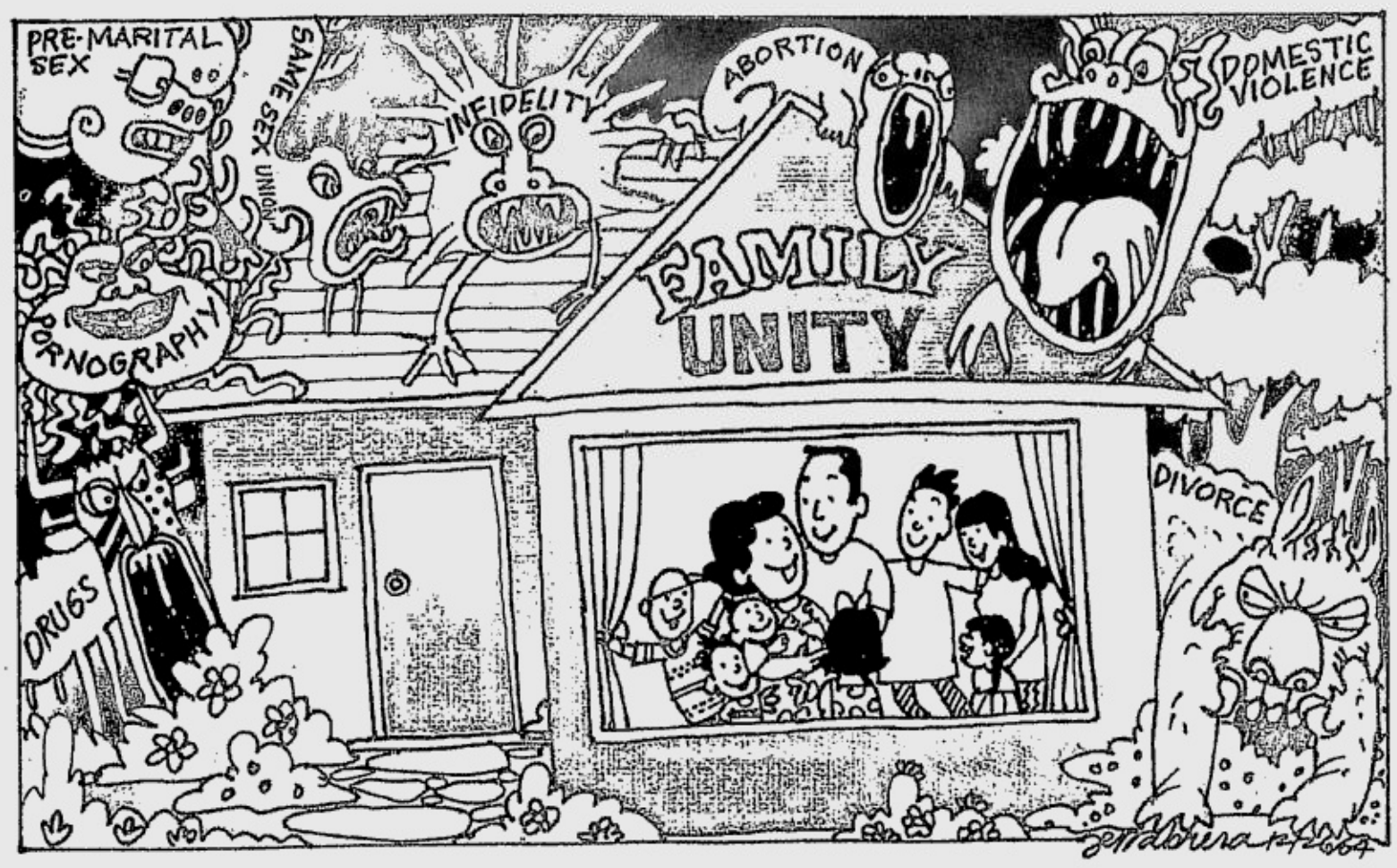

The day after

EDITORIAL

FROM THE TABLES of the rich, groaning with food, to the humble homes of the poor, where there is little materially to share—for all of us, Christmas is over. This doesn't mean the holiday season is over since it will last until after New Year's Day, after all. Still, for all of us, the giving and receiving is pretty much over.

Except for the very well-off, most Filipinos have gone through the holidays spending far more than they should. Many of us had surely hoped to receive more than we actually got. Whether it is better to give more than we got is something each individual must decide. We believe that this holiday season, far more people did more genuine giving than in recent years.

Somehow, despite the financial pressures that face all of us, people still found a way to give more. Among middle-class Filipinos, we have seen a remarkable trend in recent years. People, instead of giving material gifts, have been giving to charity or to good causes in the name of their friends. This is truly a remarkable way to celebrate Christmas. We hope more and more people, as they experience this kind of sharing, decide in the coming years to share in this manner as well.

Spontaneously, in many offices throughout the land, companies also decided to give up part, or all, of their Christmas party budgets so they could send relief goods to people suffering from the effects of the typhoons. Instead of Kriss Kringles and games, people donated to charity. There were a number of cases where management was surprised by their employees taking the initiative to give up parties so they could give to those in need. Each and every Filipino, from whatever walk of life, who gave up something so that others might have a little something, is a Filipino who truly knows what the holidays are all about.

The Armed Forces and rebels both put away their rifles, so that the country may have a little peace. This makes the holidays even more precious. At least for a little while, throughout the land where rebellion and military offensives otherwise dominate life, at least everyone can enjoy some peace and quiet.

Poverty haunts us. Natural disasters have afflicted us. Politics and rebellions divide us. And yet, rich and poor alike, most of us came together as families, and spent some time in prayer and laughing, joking, sharing. We did it in many different ways, each according to our means, but each, we believe, at least for a moment, united by the ties of affection and celebration. If we find our wallets emptier, let us hope it was because we spent for the most unfortunate, and not merely to display our good fortune.

Foreigners always say that Christmastime in the Philippines is like no other. They are right. In a world that has grown increasingly materialistic, good fortune is confused with the accumulation and display of possessions. Here, Christmas is still for the family, the extended family. This is, in the end, for all the faults of our clannish nature, a truly precious thing we can all enjoy.

The days leading up to the holidays were filled with stories of private and public grief, of tragedies shared and experienced. These stories of grief reminded all of us to cherish all the more those we love. These stories inspired us to reach out, with an embrace, with flowers, with a prayer. Our country has experienced many Christmases marked by adversity and misery. Our elders can always tell us that even if things look bad, things have been worse before.

It can never be so bad, however, if we always remember that those who have less should receive a little something from those with more. If we always bear in mind that we all feel the same emotions, and are capable of the same wants, then those who are wanting can always hope for a time when today's hunger and hopelessness will go away.

Order to the border

FOREIGN COMMENT

DURING A YEAR-END press conference, US President George W. Bush again tackled the problem of foreign workers that arrive in his country every year. He recognized that the system needs to concentrate on catching criminals and drug traffickers...

The Mexican government should aggressively take on the commitment of pushing the White House to make a migration accord a reality...

In fact, legalizing the status of millions of migrants would bring order to the border, because orderly border crossings and distribution of jobs would allow officials to identify and track foreign workers. The way the system works now is chaotic and opens the possibility that terrorists will take advantage and use it for their own benefit.

El Universal (Mexico City)

The morning after

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

CHRISTMAS is over but not the Yuletide. We still expect the coming of the New Year and, for those who would prolong the season of good cheer, the Feast of the Three Kings. Many of us must have risen late this morning because of the pleasures of the night before in celebration of the birthday of the Lord. This is one occasion when hangovers, and not necessarily from spirits of the other kind, are justified.

Despite the problems besetting the nation, we observed Christmas with the usual goodwill that the day inspired. Even those of other faiths joined in the common feeling of fellowship and, yes, also charity. Charity was especially needed this year because of the thousands of Filipinos victimized by the cupidity of those illegal loggers who denuded the forests that could have prevented the killing floods.

No less culpable is the government for its failure to avoid the tragic disasters.

Whether from deliberate connivance or stupid neglect, the responsible officials are equally guilty. The authorities should have taken the necessary measures to prevent the repetition of similar calamities that have happened before for the same greedy reasons. Instead, the irresponsible officials dallied or conspired, and thousands more have suffered because of their malfeasance.

Many Christmas parties were marked with frugality rather than the usual extravagance. Even presents were sparing and not excessive as before except where they came from thoughtless givers. There was a general resolution to economize on the celebration in sympathy for the stricken families that lost loved ones, fragile houses and meager belongings to the angry waters. The savings derived from such prudence and given to the casualties made their ordeal a little more bearable.

Everywhere in Metro Manila, and also in the rest of the country, people paused in their merrymaking to perform their works of mercy. They were not limited to the wealthy with plenty to spare but included the middle income earners and even the poor with little to share. They extended their generosity quietly, without fanfare or publicity or expectation of merited praise. Except for some companies that announced their goodness and so commercialized it, most of the people made their donations anonymous.

It is one of the virtues of our race that we spontaneously rise as one to help others when tragedy or misfortune strikes. We showed this selflessness again this year to soften the cruel fate inflicted on the typhoon victims. They could not celebrate Christmas yesterday with the usual cheer as the rest of the country did albeit without the customary flair. But the "better angels of our nature" made their misfortune less pathetic with acts of comfort and concern.

Let us hope that this extraordinary trait of generosity and compassion will never cease to adorn our nation's character. Many of the high values we nourished in the genteel past have deserted us in these more sophisticated times, like simple courtesy, respect for elders, modesty in style and attire, and even integrity. If we should also lose our innate kindness for our fellow human beings, and for animals too, then our people will be truly lost as well.

The inertia of happiness is still brightening the rest of the Yuletide, and we should enjoy it with the still blinking Christmas lights. Considering the care and artistry with which they were strung up to welcome the coming of the Infant Lord, it will be an unwilling effort to dismantle them when the joyous season ends. Until that prosaic moment comes, let us continue to savor the fantasy of Santa Claus, of his elves creating toys beyond imagination and belief, of children whose greatest gift of innocence must in time end with the coming of age and reality.

We now joyfully await the coming of the New Year next week for this is still another event that calls for continued celebration. Meanwhile, we may take the opportunity to revive discarded loves, renew forgotten friendships, heal wounds that have festered, and, yes, still send greeting cards that may have been unintentionally omitted. Christmas comes but once a year but not only for a day like yesterday. It will continue until the last colorful lantern is unhooked, the left-over feast from the *noche buena* is consumed, and we settle down at last to face the real word again.

In our jubilation over the birth of the Infant Lord, did we forget to greet him on his birthday and to thank him for his many blessings on our beloved land and its people? I hope not. Confronted by our current difficulties, we should continue to keep strong our faith in his goodness, remembering that, as Albert Einstein says, "God is subtle, but he is not malicious."

Christmas moments

MOMENTS

Fr. Jerry M. Orbos, SVD

QUESTION: When was the first plane ride of the Holy Family?

Answer: On their flight to Egypt!

Question: And who was the pilot?

Answer: Ahh...Pontius Pilot!?

* * *

Today being Christmas, we are just trying to inject humor in our opening line, but really there was nothing humorous about the first Christmas. A pregnant woman had to give birth to her first-born Son in a lowly manger because there was no room for them at the inn. A few days later, a worried father had to take the Child and his mother and flee to Egypt in the night because they were being hunted. (Mt. 2, 13-15, 19-23)

The message of the Holy Family is that in spite of poverty and the uncertainties of life, we will be all right if we hold on to each other, and we hold on to God together.

* * *

I never realized how hard the economy was until I talked to Santa Claus over the phone. I asked him how Rudolph his red-nosed reindeer was. "Oh, delicious!" was his reply.

These are difficult times for many of us. In fact, a recent SWS survey said that because of inflation and unemployment this year, only 64 percent of Filipinos (from 82 percent in 2002, and 77 percent in 2003) were looking forward to a merry Christmas. However the survey also said that 2 out of 3 Filipinos are still generally hopeful.

And what makes the Filipino happiest, especially at Christmas? The family, and just some food at the table. That goes to show that we, as a nation, with all our misery and broken dreams, still value the family.

And what is keeping our families intact and what keeps us hopeful through it all? Certainly not our brand of politics, but our faith and our belief that we will survive.

* * *

My sister Bing shared with me her experience with her students who were asked to write a letter to Santa Claus. Some kids asked for toys, some asked for money, or for the health of their parents. But the most lonely letter was from a little girl who wrote: "Dear Santa, don't bother to come. We don't celebrate Christmas at home..."

How many homes no longer celebrate or feel Christmas just because there's no peace at home, or someone just died, or someone is seriously ill, or someone is causing problems at home? Or simply because they have no home?

* * *

An inspiring insight comes from the *pamilia de cariton*, the family on wheels. Actually it is depressing to see a whole family living together in a push cart, gathering trash, salvaging whatever food from the garbage together. They spend the night in whatever safe, dark nook or corner they can find in the city, exposed to all the elements. What is inspiring about them is that they are together, and they stay together through it all. Somehow, they manage, they laugh, they go on, because though they have nothing, they have each other. Far better than those who have everything, but have no one.

* * *

I had a Christmas moment when I celebrated Mass in an isolated Army camp somewhere in Caliraya for the 1st Infantry Battalion headed by Col. Tristan Kison. Somehow, the Christmas message of peace and hope offered some comfort and meaning to these foot soldiers who risk life and limb every day, especially in their rescue and relief operations in Quezon during the recent typhoons. Many a tear fell when we prayed in silence and allowed God to embrace us under that beautiful December sky.

* * *

Another Christmas moment was when I had a healing session for the patients at a public hospital in Legazpi City. There amid the sick, the infirm and the wounded, I experienced the world to which the Savior came some 2,000 years ago, a world which still needs so much peace, healing and redemption.

* * *

On a personal note, our family experienced a Christmas moment when my cousins, the Galicias—Ed, Roly and Linda—arrived from the United States to spend Christmas in the Philippines with their teenage children who have never seen the Philippines before. It was Ate Linda's wish that they come together. Ate Linda is a stage-4 cancer survivor. She also survived the death of her eldest son some three years ago. It was a beautiful moment to remember and to be grateful. Through it all, I was so happy to see the value of prayer, integrity, charity, which our parents and grandparents have taught us, so alive in each one of us. Yes, if there is prayer in a family, there is hope, there is unity and there is strength.

* * *

Pedro: What is *butlig*?

Juan: It's some kind of a skin disease.

Pedro: Oh, I see. That's why the doctor told my friend that he will treat his left leg and right leg. Both leg!

Dear friends, remember that life is not just body, not just soul, but body and soul. Please always see, always provide, always consider in yourself and in others, the body and the soul, the material and the spiritual.

Here's wishing you all a truly blessed Christmas, and a better New Year, in all aspects, in Jesus' name. Amen!

* * *

A moment with the Lord:

Lord, thank You for giving us hope. Thank You for giving us meaning. Thank You for Christmas. Amen.

Strength and fortitude

REVEILLE

Ramon J. Farolan

IT'S been more than two weeks since deadly typhoons hit the provinces of Aurora and Quezon along the eastern seaboard of the country. More recent tragedies have taken over the front pages of our newspapers, replacing the stories of death and destruction brought about by "Violeta, " "Winnie " and " Yoyong." It is too soon to forget their victims. As the mornings get colder and we put on warmer clothing and partake of the holiday fare, let us keep in mind that they continue to need our help and assistance.

Here is a survivor's story.

For most of the folks in Barangay Ilog in Infanta, Quezon, typhoon "Winnie" was just another weather disturbance similar to others which they had to deal with from time to time. The only difference was that perhaps this one was a little bit late in the year. Already reeling from the aftermath of an earlier typhoon ("Violeta"), the last few days of November were unusually wet and windy. But Erliza G. and her husband were not too worried about the downpour. For one thing, compared to other houses in the barangay, theirs was semi-concrete and had withstood stronger storms in the past.

On Nov. 29, rain started falling since early morning and continued through the day. By evening, Erliza became aware of eerie, howling sounds as the downpour grew heavier. At 7 p.m., the waters began to rise as the strange sounds became louder. By 11 p.m., the rampaging flood waters had reached the second floor of the house, forcing the family, including their two daughters, five-year old Mary Cecille and a nine-month old infant, Neneng, to climb up to the roof. Erliza cradled the baby while her husband held on tightly to the older child.

In the darkness that enveloped them as they struggled to stay dry, Erliza could not make out her surroundings and felt the house shaking as though hit by an earthquake. Within minutes, the flood waters had swallowed up the whole house and the family members were swept away by the raging torrent of water spilling from the high ground above them.

To her horror, Erliza could barely make out the figure of her husband with their daughter being taken away by the onrushing waters. She was fully aware now what was causing the eerie sounds: floating logs being swept away by the floods. For a while, she found herself shouting for help, but in the dark, her voice was drowned out by the wind and the sound of falling rain. Soon, mother and baby were all by themselves.

Fighting fear and panic, Erliza clutched her baby even tighter as they were carried away by the waters, now gathering more strength by the minute. In her frantic search for something to cling to, she was able to get hold of a floating banana trunk. Holding Neneng with one arm and gripping the trunk with the other, Erliza struggled to keep her baby above water but the strong currents gradually weakened her. To make the situation even more difficult, a piece of galvanized iron swept by and hit her on the right hip. The sharp pain caused her to momentarily loosen her grip on the infant and in those few seconds, she lost the baby to the swirling water around her.

She kept praying, crying and shouting for help. But no one heard her or no one was around. Weakened by her frantic efforts to locate her child, she soon lost consciousness.

Erliza was carried away more than a kilometer from their place in Barangay Ilog.

When she came to, it was almost morning. A nun found her and brought her to Claro Hospital in Real, where she was reunited with her husband. She had a gaping wound in her right hip; her baby was found dead among the debris and Mary Cecille was missing. After a while, a PAF helicopter airlifted her to Villamor Air Base for more intensive care of her wound.

Recuperating at the Air Force Hospital, Erliza becomes teary-eyed each time she recalls her harrowing experience. But she does so for all who care to listen, perhaps hoping to elicit some information about her missing daughter. She continues to believe that she is safe somewhere.

* * *

In the forefront of rescue and relief operations at the height of the disaster were elements of the Armed Forces which were immediately deployed in this great humanitarian effort.

Using call sign "Angel 890," an Air Force chopper piloted by Capt. Noel Plotado and Capt. Gerald Naldoza braved bad weather conditions, a 200-ft cloud ceiling and 30-knot surface winds to air drop food supplies to people stranded in different areas in Real, Infanta and General Nakar.

Army units led by junior officers like 2nd Lt. Victor Kitong and 2nd Lt. Allan Tria moved on foot through driving rain and mud over long distances to help rescue civilians at Dingalan. Some 100 persons were transferred to safe areas before their houses were completely destroyed by falling rocks and logs.

Philippine Navy vessels navigated in darkness surrounded by floating logs which endangered the safety of the ships. They brought relief supplies as well as earth-moving equipment to clear roads and fix bridges.

The United States armed forces deployed personnel, backed by helicopters and cargo planes which airlifted food and medicine to areas rendered inaccessible by the landslides.

We salute the men in uniform for a magnificent performance. As we enjoy the holiday season in the warmth and comfort of our homes, let us not forget our less fortunate brothers. May the Prince of Peace remain in our hearts as we welcome another year.

Re-thinking Santa

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

ONE recent evening, while we were driving by our village gate, we espied the huge resin Santa that stands guard over it. Our daughter wondered out loud why, when our house is crammed with my belen collection every year, we don't use more Santas in our Christmas décor. In fact, the only Santas among our holiday trimmings are a few miniature "mutant" Santas my husband won in a 7-11 raffle.

I explained that I never really believed in the Santa myth, since my parents couldn't be bothered to go through the whole gift-giving charade, nonchalantly signing their gift cards with "Love from Papa and Mama." I followed their example when I had children of my own, but that didn't stop the two of them from imbibing the myth, and each year we would find a "letter to Santa" taped on their bedroom door, invariably containing a gift wish list, topped by that one Christmas when our son asked Santa to "give me my own room."

And that's the one thing about Santa that has bothered me all these years. Santa has become a symbol not of generosity and magnanimity, as the story of St. Nicholas is meant to be, but an icon of the worst aspects of the holiday season: materialism, excess and greed.

Maybe that's why I collect manger scenes, being my own individual way of righting the skewed priorities of Christmas as we know it today. Instead of focusing on the antics of a fat old man in a red suit delivering gifts to children on Christmas Day, we should return the spotlight to the origins of this Christian holiday, the birth of the Son of God, who chose to be born to a poor couple in the humblest of places, sharing his Nativity not with the rich and powerful but with shepherds, farm animals and angels.

Beside that compelling story and powerful symbol, I think Jolly Old St. Nick pales in comparison! Who needs Santa, right?

* * *

IT was while watching "Polar Express" that I finally understood the need for Santa Claus.

For those who have yet to see the film, it's the animated version of a children's book about a boy, on the cusp of adolescence, who's starting to doubt the existence of Santa Claus. Despite the signs telling him otherwise, the boy still wants to believe, especially since his younger sister is an ardent believer.

On the night before Christmas, the boy is wakened from sleep by the arrival of the "Polar Express," a train managed by a crusty conductor (Tom Hanks, who also voices the boy and other characters) that brings children to the North Pole for an extra-special treat: meeting Santa face-to-face and paying a visit to Christmas town.

The filmmakers said they wanted the animated movie to retain the "look" and feel of the book, which became a contemporary classic upon its publication. And indeed "Polar Express" brings to life every facet of the Santa myth, answering every question that ever occurred to every child thinking about Santa Claus and his complex operations.

How does Santa "keep" his list? With the help of an army of elves who keep a computerized data bank of the world's children. How are all the gifts prepared and gift-wrapped? With an assembly line that ends in a humongous funnel that drops the gifts into Santa's giant sleigh. And how does Santa know what gifts to give? By reading into the minds and hearts of all those who believe.

* * *

THAT was when it struck me. Santa is a Christmas story for a secular world. We all need our traditions and children especially need a back-story to tell them why, on this one day of the year, we celebrate by getting together, sharing a meal and exchanging gifts.

Santa is especially popular in the United States, in a society where people of all races, ethnicities, faiths and beliefs strive to live together in harmony and to unite around a common culture despite their many differences and religions. Santa is thus a uniting factor, a "harmless" symbol of holiday cheer and generosity who doesn't provoke religious questions or offend religious sensibilities.

Though Christmas is and should be primarily a religious celebration, it is now no longer exclusively the domain of Christians. It has been commercialized and homogenized, true, but it has also served to bring the entire world together in good cheer and company at least one day a year.

Santa Claus, then, is a symbol around whom young people, and people young-at-heart, can accept without question or rancor, a myth easily accessible and acceptable, a symbol against whom we can bounce off our deepest aspirations, yearnings and hopes. It isn't the jolly old man's fault that he has come to mean wish lists and gifts to children, who are simply responding to the signals sent by the adults around them.

Maybe there can be room for Santa in my home at Christmas, after all.

* * *

EVEN the most ardent of Santa fans, though must find this message, sent to me by TV director Ida Vargas, funny and enlightening.

"According to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, while both male and female reindeer grow antlers in the summer each year, male reindeer drop their antlers at the beginning of winter, usually late November to mid-December. Female reindeer retain their antlers until after they give birth in the spring.

"Therefore, according to EVERY historical rendition depicting Santa's reindeer, EVERY single one of them, from Rudolph to Blitzen, had to be a girl. We should've known... ONLY women would be able to drag a fat-ass man in a red velvet suit all around the world in one night and not get lost."

And that would be, of course, because the female reindeer would have first bothered to read the maps before setting off, and when they strayed, they would not have been ashamed to ask directions from utter strangers.

Religion, cinema and politics

PUBLIC LIVES

Randy David

OUTSIDE the church where his remains lay in state, Fernando Poe Jr.'s movies were being played for the common folk who lined up and waited for hours to take a last quick look at their idol. No scene more graphically captures the substance of Filipino culture. An FPJ movie has the same effect on his fans as a religious experience: the cleansing of the spirit and release from bondage. The actor has more in common with a prophet than with a politician.

They came not only to bid him goodbye. They were there also to thank him for his kindness, and to ask his spirit to continue to watch over them. In this manner do we, as Filipinos, accept the enigma of death. Death prompts us not only to recall where we have come from, but also to ask where we are going. The resolution of death's mystery constitutes the core of every religion.

Some observers have compared FPJ's funeral with that of Ninoy Aquino's in 1983. The crowds that attended the two events were comparable; FPJ and Ninoy were both heroic figures, but the similarity ends there. Ninoy's funeral was a political event that acquired religious meanings. FPJ's funeral, in contrast, was a religious moment that acquired political undertones. Ninoy, as a political symbol, gained in stature from the spiritualization of his death. His greatness has survived the failure of Edsa I. FPJ, as a cultural icon, stood to lose everything from the politicization of his death. His star would have dimmed if his funeral had sparked an Edsa IV.

A glance at the depreciation of politics in the eyes of our people would be enough to explain this phenomenon. So low has the image of the politician in our society sunk that hardly anyone who ventures into the world of politics today can hope to leave it with his name intact. It was for a good reason that Fernando Poe Jr. was a reluctant politician.

Some people have read political meanings into the passing reference made by Susan Roces to the way FPJ was unfairly treated during the presidential elections. But these statements must be taken in the context of the media interviews in which they were given. She was asked what she thought of the government's plan to honor her late husband by conferring on him a posthumous National Artist award and arranging for his burial at the Libingan ng mga Bayani. With admirable restraint, she questioned the integrity of this offer by comparing it with the foul manner in which her husband was portrayed during the election by the same administration that was now proposing to honor him. This great woman was determined not to allow her husband's death to be the instrument of anybody's political agenda.

Aware that these statements could easily be misreported as the launching of a political bid, Ms Roces stressed that she had no political ambition and would not run for any political office. But she also said that she would continue to champion the cause of the poor on whose behalf her husband had sought the presidency. This advocacy may inevitably cast her in a political role, but I believe her when she says that politics, as we know it in this country, is farthest from her nature.

If some politicians of the administration and the opposition thought that the grieving admirers of FPJ could be transformed into a raging mob and re-rerouted from the cemetery to the Palace, they were mistaken. They know nothing of the spiritual nature of mourning in our culture, a purgation rather than a loading of the emotions.

The Arroyo administration should be ashamed of itself for reacting the way it did during the funeral. Instead of maintaining a respectful silence in the face of the collective mourning for a fallen warrior, it called in the Armed Forces to fortify and defend the Palace against the assault of an imagined enemy. The justice secretary, Raul Gonzalez, appeared on television to issue a warning against acts of sedition, forgetting that the Arroyo regime he serves was installed in 2001 by such acts of sedition. The state would be constrained to defend itself, he intoned. So it will—against the sovereign people. The secretary personifies the pathetic paranoia of a government that, because of its own duplicity, has become fearful of its citizens.

If this government falls, it will not be because of the anger of FPJ's grieving supporters. It will collapse from the weight of its own corruption, hypocrisy and incompetence. And, yes, from its own fears. President Macapagal-Arroyo would have learned nothing if all she saw at the funeral were the anti-government messages that some of the actor's admirers wrote on banners and manila paper. For the real message of the funeral was the deep affection that the simple folk lavished upon the man they regarded as a hero. If she had watched Susan Roces during all this time, she might also have learned a lesson on what it means to speak from the heart.

How sad that our politics should be discontinuous from our people's faith. How tragic that our nation's leaders should be the opposite of the movie world's heroes. Should one still wonder why our voters try to repair this weakness by turning to preachers and movie actors for leadership? We know, of course, that the solution does not lie in this, nor in the vain attempt to discredit preachers and actors who enter politics. The solution, reason tells us, lies alone in the urgent task of reforming and elevating politics itself.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the writer Judith Butler asked: "What, politically, might be made of grief besides a cry for war?"

It is a question we might ask ourselves in this season of tragedy and grace.

* * *

Comments to davidinquirer@yahoo.com

Brown folks dreaming of a white Christmas

COMMENTARY

Isabel T. Escoda

DESPITE six decades of independence from the Americans, too many Filipinos seem still mired in what are basically colonial attitudes and values. Of course, there have been, over the years, some soul-searching and a harking back to traditional native values among nationalists and historians. However, the sense one gets about the aspirations and attitudes of the general populace—particularly among the migrant workers abroad—is that there is little, if any, real pride of country in the ordinary Filipino. Sadly, there seems to be a tendency to deny one's roots and instead to display a deep-seated desire to behave like—if not try to become—Americans.

This fact was brought home to me at a recent pre-Christmas event in Hong Kong. The Philippine Consulate had imported over two dozen *parols* from Pampanga which were set up at Chater Garden in the city's business and hotel district of Central. Some Hong Kong officials were invited to the inauguration, along with other dignitaries and resident Filipinos; and before the *parol* lighting took place, a combo provided rather loud jazzed-up music, trotting out the perennially popular (for Pinoys) and totally inappropriate Western songs like "White Christmas" and "Winter Wonderland," among others while people chatted and milled around the drinks and *lumpia*.

After the arrival of Secretary for Home Affairs Patrick Ho, who, along with Consul General Corazon Belmonte Jover, was supposed to turn on the switch that would light the lanterns, the consul gave a brief talk about the meaning of the traditional *parol* in the context of a Filipino Christmas. Ho responded by remarking on the great service provided by Filipinos who comprise the largest foreign community in the territory, the majority being domestic workers.

Then both officials flicked the switch to turn on the lights in the lanterns, at which point two nightclub performers (a male-female duo) started to belt out, with a maximum of lung power, a jazzed-up version of "Christmastime in the City." The extra high-decibel sound system was such that someone remarked it could probably be heard as far away as Wanchai district and beyond.

The screeching duo—one a gaudily dressed Pinay whose singing style was a mishmash of Tina Turner and Madonna, and an ageing ponytailed man (purportedly the most popular Pinoy singer in Hong Kong)—belted out their numbers with such abandon, passersby were seen staring, probably wondering about the source of the racket.

Instead of giving true meaning to the occasion by presenting native carols, the musicians carried on displaying a high degree of tastelessness by performing syncopated versions of Western Christmas songs which lent a totally discordant—and inappropriate—note to the proceedings.

Few seemed to notice the Hong Kong officials smiling gamely at the eardrum-shattering noise ("music" would be the wrong word). It made one wonder if they looked tolerantly at Pinoys as incorrigible children. The forced merrymaking could only reinforce the perception among many foreigners that Pinoys not only lack nationalism and have no qualms about engaging in ersatz behavior, they never seem to grow up.

Thanks to the efforts of a small group of longtime Pinoy residents in Hong Kong like myself, a more solemn event will take place on Dec. 30 this year. After obtaining permission from the Hong Kong Historical and Antiquities Board, a plaque will be put up in a lane alongside that engineering wonder, the Central-to-Midlevels escalator, marking the place where Jose Rizal once lived.

When our national hero arrived in Hong Kong after his European sojourn, he sent for his family, which managed to obtain permission to leave Manila from the Spanish colonial authorities. It was at No. 2 Rednaxela Terrace, from December 1891 to June 1892, where the Rizal family lived—quite happily enjoying the freedom of the British colony, according to the late British historian Austin Coates. Coates wrote that the oddly named lane was the handiwork of a Chinese signpainter who was given the name "Alexander" to paint on the hillside. Not knowing English, he put the letters the wrong way around—hence, Rednaxela.

Over the past five years, there have been two other plaques set up as a result of our requests—one in Central's D'Aguilar Street, showing where Rizal had had his medical clinic, and the other on Morrison Hill Road in Wanchai where the first Philippine flag was sewn which was later taken to Kawit, Cavite, for Aguinaldo's declaration of independence in June 1898.

Thankfully, at the Dec. 30 ceremony in Hong Kong, there will be no need for Pinoys to act like little brown Americans by displaying the talent to replicate Western singers. As one British writer noted about the prevalence of Filipino musicians around Asia, "They've no originality, but they're wonderful imitators of every Western singing style you can name."

A sad commentary indeed. It would probably make Rizal turn in his grave.

Journalist Isabel T. Escoda is a longtime Hong Kong resident who has written the books "Letters From Hong Kong" and "Hong Kong Postscript."

THEY SAID

Give and take

"We protected what we needed to protect and conceded where we needed to concede."

—Japan's Agriculture Minister Yoshinobu Shimamura on the trade agreement between his country and the Philippines

Symbol of shrinkage

"The sampaguita is our national flower, but it has become a symbol of our shrinking capacities."

—Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman, on the government's plan to give alternative sources of income to mothers of child vendors

Mad

"I'm going nuts, I'm angry over why these killings are happening."

—Philippine National Police Director General Edgar Aglipay, denouncing the killing of journalists

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PHILIPPINE PRESS INSTITUTE
The National Association of Philippine Newspapers

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Editor Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.

TALK of the TOWN

What happened to waste segregation?

THIS Yuletide season, the volume of garbage is expected to go up as Filipinos celebrate the birth of the Messiah with gift-giving, parties, reunions, *noche buena* and fireworks.

Today, a day after Christmas, garbage bins overflow with discarded wrapping paper, cardboard boxes, food scraps, plastic cups, soda and beer cans, cellophane and other kinds of refuse—biodegradable and non-biodegradable.

Most households and business establishments do not put biodegradable waste in plastic bags separate from the non-biodegrable waste, although the three-year-old Solid Waste Management Law, or Republic Act No. 9003 requires segregation.

People do not segregate garbage, a violation of the Solid Waste Management Law, because of the dearth of information on the law.

People must start separating biodegradable from non-biodegradable waste because the proliferation of dumps across the country threatens their health. Dumps can contaminate the water table and breed disease.

There is no need for dumps if people recycle and segregate. Fifty-percent of waste is biodegradable and can be composted to fertilize gardens and fields. The other 50 percent is non-biodegradable but 30 percent of that can be turned into hollow blocks or decorative pavement. The remaining 20 percent, which includes hazardous wastes, can also be recycled.

So segregation and recycling make sense.

For a change, give plants this season

By Gloria Estenzo Ramos

A nine-year-old scavenger, eking out a living was buried alive by an avalanche of garbage in the dump of a city in Metro Manila. Who must answer for his death?

His parents?

The barangay and the city, for allowing children and adults entry to the hazardous open dump? The dump is by itself prohibited.

The President, for not ensuring that health and environmental laws are implemented by local government units (LGUs)?

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources, for not exercising its mandate to close the hazardous site?

Or us, the consumers, who throw away used materials with no care at all where they end up?

Have we become a generation of uncaring and irresponsible dwellers of this planet? The effects of a garbage crisis are palpable—the carrying capacity of landfills is prematurely pushed to the limit, the search for possible landfill sites confront the LGUs and people oppose the idea of a dumping ground in their neighborhood.

Ground water

The skin diseases afflicting scavengers and clogged *esteros* are a daily sight, the dying marine life as a result of indiscriminate dumping of plastics and toxic waste is a reality, the deteriorating quality of ground waters, and the barren forest lands. The list goes on and on.

Oh, yes, we do have environmental laws enacted to stem the tide of ecological destruction brought about by man's greed and indifference. But, as environmental advocate and author Antonio A. Oposa Jr. says these laws languish in the "sickbed of non-compliance."

The Solid Waste Management Law or Republic Act No. 9003 institutionalized waste segregation and reduction among Filipinos. It affirms the rights of citizens to hold any person, government agencies and public officials accountable for the violation of or failure to implement the law.

LGUs are responsible for waste collection, storage and disposal because the barangay and other local leaders are presumably in close touch with the problems, needs and desires of their constituents.

Criminal liability

Sadly, three years after RA 9003's effectivity, waste segregation is not practiced at all in most offices, public places and homes, except in few model barangays and cities like Barangay Luz in Cebu City and Dumaguete. The people are not aware that by littering, dumping, burning solid waste and not segregating, they are incurring criminal liability.

Ordinary citizens do not hold the monopoly of transgression, however. Public servants—in the executive, legislative and judicial branches, and even constitutional bodies—defy the law.

There is a dearth of information and lack of awareness about the law. Worse, violators go scot-free. No thanks to the indifference of the government, people and business sector. The stakeholders do not care to understand the law and the respective roles each play in its implementation.

How do we make each individual aware of the ecological time bomb that is ticking and of his or her role in preventing the explosion? We must confront and respond to this challenge quickly. Now.

It is high time we focus seriously on our responsibilities in caring for our community and country. We must move our government officials into action, call the attention of the violators, and be involved in the awareness campaign. If everything else does not work, people can exercise the option to exact compliance from government officials and sue for accountability like what some lawyers did in a southern city.

We are now in the midst of the holiday season that usually finds people go overdrive in shopping for gifts for loved ones. The mountains of discarded goods, trinkets and other consumables will predictably ensue. For a change, why not give creative recycled items instead? Or better still, give a gift of life—a seedling, plants or even seeds. It is not only economical but also ecologically sustaining.

The bottom line is—each one must reduce the garbage and conserve the Earth's resources. Let us do our share for Nature, for planet Earth, for our survival and for the children yet unborn.

(Ramos is the deputy chair for the Visayas of the National Environmental Action Team—Integrated Bar of the Philippines.)

Landfills are unnecessary if we recycle

By Joey C. Papa and Ana V. Papa

Heavy rains flooded Metro Manila and adjoining northern provinces last August, killing people and causing heavy damage to property and the environment. Garbage was pinpointed as the major culprit.

As the Christmas holidays will again generate more garbage, let us take note of Republic Act No. 9003, which mandates ecological solid waste management and closure of dumps by February 2006.

The word *maka-kalikasan* is the heart and soul of the law.

The realistic objectives of ecological solid waste management are waste reduction, re-use, sorting and segregation, recycling and composting.

It deals with waste at the source, in households, or at least in the barangay Ecology Center (Eco-Center) or Materials Recovery Facility (MRF). Therefore, there is no need for dumps and landfills that eat up hundreds to thousands of hectares, pollute the surroundings and cause catastrophes as the Payatas dump did in 2000.

Dumps

To date, there are some 800 open dumps, more than a hundred controlled dumps (e.g., in Payatas, Rodriguez, Tanza and Navotas), and four "sanitary" landfills. Still, more than a hundred are being proposed.

The eco-center system or MRF classifies solid wastes as differentiated, say from effluents, in order to effectively carry out segregation.

Biodegradable (*nabubulok*) waste includes kitchen, yard or garden, animal and human waste, toilet wipes, sanitary pads and diapers (sans the plastic covering). Separate these from non-biodegradable (*di nabubulok*) waste, which includes metal, glass, plastic, rubber, bonded or blended composites (such as juice packs), and conditional materials of biodegradable origin but which, if clean and dry, may be considered non-biodegradable (such as used paper or cardboard, fiber or cloth, hair, leather, hides or skins of animals, bones, shells, ceramics, rocks, wood, rattan and bamboo).

Composting at home

With an eco-center system in place in an enlightened barangay, biowaste is composted at home (in sacks or other containers and covered with soil, cocodust or similar materials, with enough heat from the sun, aeration and some moisture or inoculants that also help prevent foul odor). Biowaste can also be deposited in a clean container and brought to the eco-center for composting.

Non-biowaste is cleaned, dried and set aside for the cart-pushing junk collectors or brought to the eco-center, where the recyclers or junk dealers can go and take their pick.

About 50 percent of waste generated is biodegradable and may be composted to rehabilitate degraded soils or enhance gardening. Of the other 50 percent, which is non-biodegradable, some 30 percent may be re-used or recycled immediately—including so-called residuals that junk shops don't usually buy such as candy wrappers and seemingly useless discarded materials but which can be turned into decorative pavement or hollow blocks and other construction materials.

The remaining 20 percent, which includes hazardous, infectious and toxic waste, should be treated first and then recycled. Consider then the reduction in raw materials extraction. The municipality or city could take up responsibility for this task from the barangay.

Barangays Linomot (Isabela), Panoypoy (Samar), Holy Spirit (Quezon City), Bued (Pangasinan) and Sta. Cruz (Batangas) were recently chosen as the best five model villages for eco-waste management.

Barangay Tuktukan declined to join because the municipal dump was right in its area.

On Aug. 23, however, it finally got this dump closed. Encouraged by the support of Bulacan Gov. Josefina dela Cruz in coordination with the municipality of Guiguinto and Bangon Kalikasan Movement, local officials led by Barangay Captain Romeo Tonog and Councilor Nora Santos renewed the community's commitment to waste segregation plus, this time, composting at the household level, segregated collection using three tri-bikes and segregated destination in a modest eco-center.

The council then passed a resolution to close the dump. Mayor Ambrosio Cruz agreed after getting the concurrence of his 13 other barangay captains, who must now put up their own eco-centers. Barangay Tuktukan, with a population of 10,000, shows that home- and barangay-based eco-waste management through segregation, recycling and composting works.

(The Papas are founding members of Bangon Kalikasan Movement. Email: bangon_kalikasan@skyinet.net)

ILLUSTRATION BY LA MISTADES/PAGE DESIGN BY ERNIE SAMBO

Garbage fast facts

- In Metro Manila, about 5,900 tons of garbage or 0.5 kg per person is being generated daily.
- For areas outside Metro Manila, the waste generation rate ranges from 0.3 to about 0.5 kg per person a day.
- Residents of urban centers produce between 0.5 and 0.7 kg a day, while those in rural areas generate 0.3 kg per person a day.
- Average composition of solid wastes in the Philippines (percent by weight): Yard and field waste: 33.5 percent; Fines and inert: 12.9 percent; Wood: 11.5 percent; Food waste: 11 percent; Paper and cardboard: 10.2 percent; Plastic and petroleum products: 9.8 percent; Textiles: 4.1 percent; Metals: 3.3 percent; Glass: 1.9 percent; Leather and rubber: 1.8 percent
- Majority of Metro Manila's dumps will reach capacity this year.
- More than 4,300 waste pickers work at the dumps.
- Number of open dumps nationwide: 800
- Number of controlled dumps: more than a hundred including Payatas
- Number of sanitary landfills: 4

SOURCES: NATIONAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMISSION AND BANGON KALIKASAN MOVEMENT

Some restos now into segregation

By Albert Magalang

The production of goods based on new materials has created a problem: mountains of wastes that are not easily decomposed. Instead, they generate and build up harmful gases and liquids and voluminous solid wastes.

They become not only eyesores but major threats to health and ecological balance. Their disposal also becomes a source of social conflict because communities are critical of various waste handling and disposal facilities.

Quite a number of environmental laws have been enacted in the country. The most recent of which is Republic Act No. 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, which calls for the institutionalization of a national program that will manage the control, transfer, transport, processing and disposal of solid waste in the country.

Model

One of the key features of the law is segregation at source. The scheme has been taught by several nongovernmental organizations even prior to the enactment of RA 9003. Several communities have adopted the scheme and established composting and recovery facilities in their area. Some have become successful. Others need more assistance. Those that succeeded were recognized in the recent National Search for the Model Barangay in Eco-Solid Waste Management.

The private sector (specifically the quick service restaurants) has also adopted waste segregation.

The government, in collaboration with several NGOs, is pushing for the full implementation of RA 9003. Technical assistance is being provided to LGUs to help them implement the law.

(Magalang is the executive director of the National Solid Waste Management Commission.)

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GMA vows pursuit of log poachers

By Anselmo Roque
PDI Central Luzon Desk

GENERAL TINIO, Nueva Ecija—On Christmas Eve, President Macapagal-Arroyo was unforgiving. To illegal loggers and illegal cutters of timber, that is.

"*Masigasig ang pagkilos ng pamahalaan laban sa kanila* (The government is really determined in its move against them)," she told a press briefing here Friday afternoon.

In about three months, she said she would be given an account of what had been done about prosecuting illegal loggers and timber poachers and in stopping illegal logging.

"By the third week of March, I am expecting reports of many good accomplishments of the Task Force on Illegal Logging headed by Gen. (Victor) Corpus," she said.

"As you can see now, the task force is conducting raids on sawmills and has been running after suspected illegal loggers. We are really determined to punish them."

The President ordered military and police officials to arrest those transporting illegally-cut logs. "If they are suspected to be illegally-cut logs, make the necessary arrest," she told military and police officials present during the briefing.

She said those caught transporting illegal logs could be arrested even without the presence of Department of Environment and Natural Resources personnel.

Under present regulations, only DENR personnel can confiscate illegal logs and charge their owners in court.

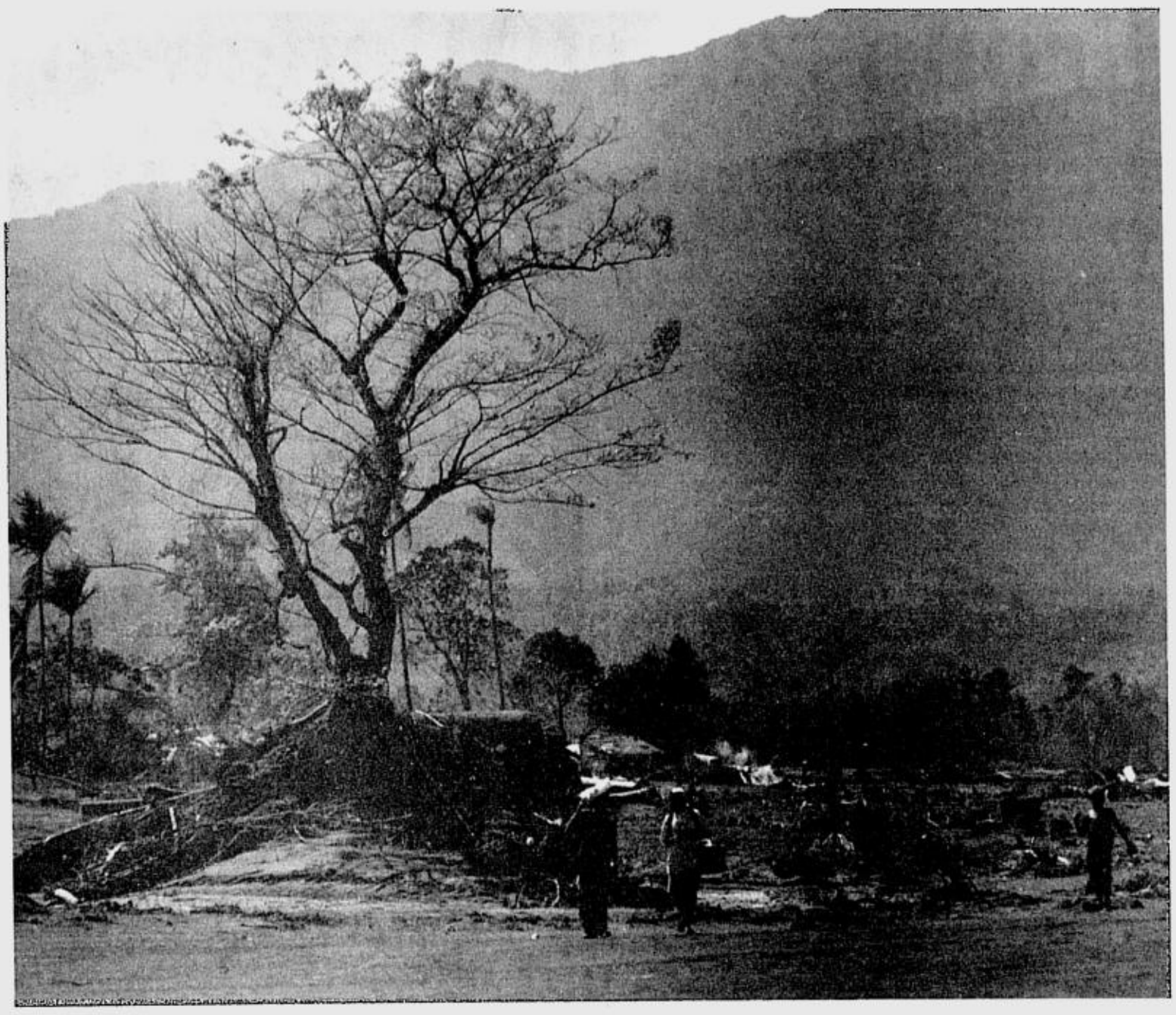
Ms Arroyo earlier made an aerial survey of the destruction caused by the recent typhoons and flash floods in Nueva Ecija.

She said she was very saddened by what she saw here and in Dingalan, Aurora, when she visited the area on Thursday.

She said she was aghast to learn that the forest denudation in the area was not caused only by logging companies but also by people engaged in timber poaching.

Timber poaching, which is carried out by people paid by financiers engaged in illegal logging, is called "carabao logging."

As the President appeared unforgiving to illegal loggers and timber poachers, she showed motherly concern for victims of the recent calamities here and in the Bicol region.



A TREE is left alone in the vastness of the destruction wrought on Barangay Ilog in Infanta, Quezon, by logging. REM ZAMORA

In Gabaldon town which she also visited, she assured the victims of government help in rebuilding their homes and farms. She said the government had started relief operations on Dec. 15 and would next give assistance to the victims.

The President told the victims that she visited them on Christmas Eve not only to bring Christmas cheer but also to extend the message of hope for a better tomorrow.

"*May bagong pag-asa, bagong buhay, at tutulungan kayo para sa pagtatayo ng bagong bahay* (There's new hope, new life, and you will be given assistance for the building of your houses)," she said in her brief message in Gabaldon.

Asked about her reaction to surveys and comments on the sad state of affairs, particularly about the economy, she said what is happening today is a result of decades of too much reliance of the country on debts which are now being repaid.

She said the country is deep in debt and cannot fully move on.

Baguio cooks up gimmicks to attract tourists

BAGUIO CITY—Meningococcemia has probably driven the final nail on Baguio tourism's coffin, at least for 2004. But city residents will not take it lying down.

Boat rentals at Burnham Lake, one of the most visited spots of this 95-year-old American-built city, have dropped from P60 an hour to P60 for a "one-to-*sawa* (until you drop)" package.

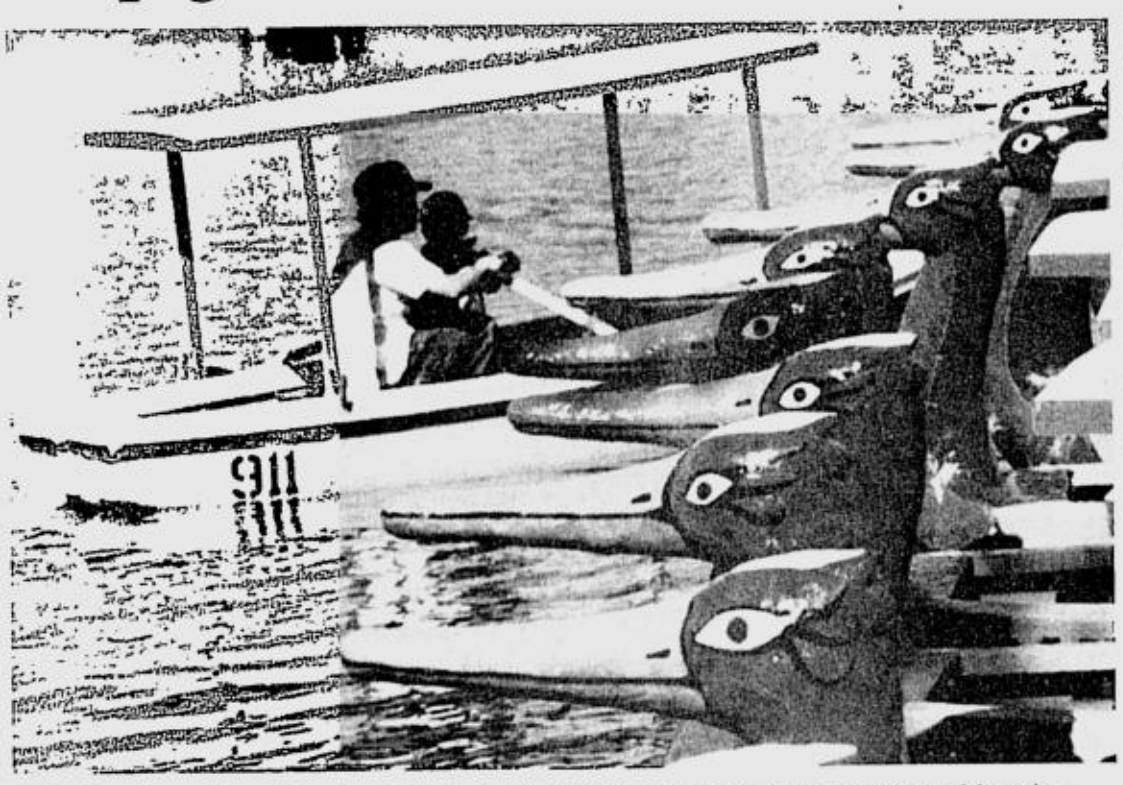
"We want visitors to feel at home again. Burnham Park is where lovers meet, where marriages are made, where children (of landlocked provinces in Northern Luzon) first encounter boats," Efren, a commercial boat rental pitchman, said.

Near the lake, enterprising commercial photographers have been drawing domestic tourists from Mt. Province, La Union and Pangasinan to a three-year-old St. Bernard named Bertie, who amiably poses with children for P60 a shot.

Ernie, the dog's owner, said Bertie has been a profitable innovation for Burnham Park enterprises, which have been suffering a slump since the Baguio Flower Festival last year.

A Department of Tourism report showed tourist arrivals dropped by 22 percent from January to November this year. But it is a trend that has been plaguing the summer capital since 2000, according to Jovy Ganongan, a DOT Cordillera tourism officer.

Hotels reported only 25,000 bookings in November, compared to the 63,000 bookings in 75 facilities in November last year, DOT records showed.



BOATS await tourists at Burnham Lake in Baguio City. Operators are trying to attract visitors by charging P60 for a boat ride for an unlimited period compared to P60 per hour before. EV ESPIRITU/PDI NORTHERN LUZON

Most guests, who were attending conventions in the city, backed out when the Department of Health confirmed a meningococcemia outbreak that had claimed 11 lives as of this week.

The decline of tourist arrivals has been attributed to Baguio's urban decay.

"There's nothing new to offer tourists (except the cool weather), and our parks still need some sprucing up," Ganongan said.

City Hall employees admit that the city's routine upkeep has been obstructed by financial and operational problems. Baguio's major traffic light grids are not working, compounding the heavy traffic jams that regularly hit downtown.

Burnham Lake only started drawing back tourists in September, after Mayor Braulio Yaranon complained to the Department of Public Works and Highways that it had connected a sewer pipe to the lake's rainwater drain.

Meningococcemia has hastened the city's plunging visitor numbers for November, when tourism normally picks up, Ganongan said. Baguio's most profitable tourism periods are during the Christmas holidays and Holy Week.

Based on tourism booking reports from 60 percent of Baguio's hotels and inns, tourism had consistently slid down, except in April, she said.

Cordillera recorded 620,000 tourists from January and November, a far cry from the region's 812,000 tourists from January to December in 2003. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

41, mostly kids, hurt in firecracker blasts in Cebu, Iloilo, Leyte

CEBU CITY—At least 41 persons, including children, were brought to different hospitals in Cebu, Iloilo and Leyte due to blast injuries during the Christmas revelry.

Of the number, 38 were from three cities in Cebu—Cebu, Mandaue and Lapulapu. Two were in Tacloban City, Leyte, and one was in Iloilo.

Among those hurt were Diego Vergara, 38, and his two-year-old son, Nikko, who were brought to the Cebu City Medical Center for blast injuries in their hands.

Vergara, of Barangay Labangon in Cebu City, said his son picked up a lighted firecracker while playing in their yard on Christmas Eve.

Vergara said he was trying to take the firecracker from his son when it exploded.

A staffer of the Department of Health in Central Visayas said they could not tell if the number of blast victims in Cebu had increased or decreased because their office was still gathering data from other hospitals.

In Iloilo, Jane Andrea Gale, 2, was brought to the Western Visayas Medical Center for treatment of bruises she suffered after a firecracker exploded near her.

In Iloilo, only one case was reported, compared to the six blast injury cases treated at the government-run hospital in the previous year's Christmas Day celebration.

In Leyte, two blast victims were brought to the Eastern Visayas Regional Medical Center in Tacloban City. They were Mark Jay Cadion, 12, of Tacloban, and Julito Hinay, 25, of Mahaplag town.

Ligaya Acosta, DOH information officer in Eastern Visayas, said the number was lower compared to the seven blast victims reported last year.

A policeman and a member of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology were held for firing their guns.

PO1 Roy Jaime, a member of the Mobile Patrol Group, was arrested by his colleagues for firing his gun at around 4 a.m. in Upper Bacayan, Cebu City.

The MPG also arrested JO1 Ceferino Somoza, 27, and a BJMP member in Consolacion town in Cebu, for firing at the back of the Guadalupe Church in Cebu City at about 3:49 a.m. yesterday.

The husband of a retired policewoman was killed after he accidentally shot himself on Christmas Eve in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental.

Diosdado Bedonia had an argument with his wife, retired SPO4 Nelly Bedonia, at about 10:30 p.m. inside their house at Curva Hagnaya in Barangay Tabun-ac.

Nelly locked herself in their room. Apparently irked, Diosdado tried to open the door by hitting the doorknob with the butt of a .30-cal. M2 carbine rifle. The firearm went off and the bullet hit Diosdado in the head. *Jhunnex Napallacan, Nestor P. Burgos Jr., Joey A. Gabieta and Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Judge's Xmas break leaves chaos between workers, contractor

ATOK, Benguet—A judge's untimely Christmas break has left residents furious as disgraced employees of a contractor for the rehabilitation of the Halsema Highway are free to get pieces of heavy equipment here.

Judge Benigno Galacgac of the regional trial court in La Trinidad town went on Christmas leave on Dec. 15 even as former employees and subcontractors of Francis Gutierrez Construction Corp. (FGCC) filed separate third-party claims for the equipment left by the firm.

The owner of the property in Sayangan here, where the pieces of equipment were left, also asked for remuneration of the debt left by FGCC.

But because Galacgac failed to act on their claims, the FGCC was able to get equipment from the stockyard of the Daewoo Engineering and Construction Corp. in Buguias, Benguet.

Angry residents set up bonfires on the tracks of FGCC and threw stones at their trailers, but the Manila-based firm was still able to bring out a backhoe, a bulldozer, an air compressor and a power generator.

Sixty-six former employees of FGCC based here said the company failed to pay their Social Security System and Philhealth premiums.

FGCC was dismissed by Daewoo for nonperformance, after completing only 25 percent of what was expected of it. The firm also owed Daewoo P70 million.

The 66 employees, in their joint third-party claims, said the equipment left by FGCC should be given to them as payment for their claims.

"Since FGCC is a contractor based in Metro Manila, its only asset that we know of is the equipment left along Halsema Highway. We are entitled to the possession of the equipment until such time that our wages and benefits are fully settled," they said.

John Haight, owner of the property in Sayangan, said FGCC's accumulated claims had reached P200,000.

FGCC's subcontractors also filed separate third-party claims against FGCC on Dec. 20. They said FGCC did not pay them their retention fees. Their total claims reached more than P500,000.

They said they wanted to possess FGCC's equipment until the company paid their fees.

In two instances in October, FGCC employees, accompanied by members of the Cordillera People's Liberation Army, stormed the Daewoo stockyard and took almost P25 million worth of equipment. *Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

INQUIRER Mindanao

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Groups alert Mindanao folk to scam

By Jeffrey M. Tupas
Davao City

VARIOUS entities in Mindanao, including those in the government, have warned the public not to fall prey to a group that offers attractive packages and promises of economic development.

That group calls itself Bangsamoro Economic and Development Council Inc. or Bedco.

The information gathered and documents obtained by the INQUIRER show that Bedco, which claims a membership base of about 500,000, has been operating for years now, offering job placements with juicy salary rates in exchange for fees from applicants. The money would allegedly be used as processing fees and for the reservation of posts.

The group also promises to undertake projects worth millions of pesos including those for public health, livelihood and education.

And some people on this development-hungry island have taken the bait.

Sources said the people behind Bedco could have already raked in millions of pesos just from fees they collected from hopeful jobseekers.

High salaries

In North Cotabato, the group offered an accounting graduate an P18,000 monthly salary—plus perks and allowances—for a supervisory job.

The aspirant, whose elder relative was offered a much higher position with P30,000 take-home pay plus car, paid P200 as a processing fee.

A security guard, also in North Cotabato, was promised a P10,000 monthly salary.

In Davao City, a cab driver applied for two positions: as a driver and as a municipal coordinator. As a Bedco driver he was promised a P15,000 monthly salary and P30,000 a month if he gets the municipal coordinator post. The cabbie paid a processing fee of P800.

A check with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) office in Davao City said Bedco was registered on May 25, 1999, as a nonstock corporation with registration number D199900475. It is headed by a Datu Salik Buhisan, with principal office at Purok 26, Times Beach, Bucana, Matina, Davao City.

Documents obtained by the INQUIRER also showed that the group has a Manila office, which serves as their national headquarters. Its address: c/o Vanguard Anti-Graft Task Force HQ, 14 IBP Road, Batasan Hills, Quezon City.

Donations?

Carmen Toledo, Bedco's chair for Southern Mindanao, said they never collected money from their recruits. She told radio station dxND in Kidapawan City that the money they collected from the applicants were not compulsory fees, but donations.

"We don't have funds for mobilization. The money that was collected was used for the follow-up of the release of our money," she said.

Buhisan described the collection of fees as "normal and part of the procedure in every NGO or development foundation."

Joselito Rodriguez, SEC Monitoring Division Head, said the nature of Bedco's registration does not permit its officials to recruit people for employment.

As a nonstock corporation, Bedco's articles of incorporation indicate that the group is only allowed to accept economic aid, donations, grants, loans and other forms of financial assistance from both foreign and local lending institutions.

Its primary purpose, as indicated in the articles of incorporation, is to undertake the implementation of socioeconomic development programs designed to alleviate the standard of living of the Bangsamoro inhabitants in Mindanao.

Also, it is to serve as a co-partner of the government in its various socioeconomic development endeavors in Mindanao, through donations, grants and loans that would come from the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the World Islamic Bank.

Scam

"We got inquiries from many people already. These people claimed that Bedco collected money from them in exchange for certain positions with very high salaries enough to embarrass other executives," Rodriguez said.

Atty. Godofredo Duremdes, SEC officer-in-charge, said they still have to receive complaints from those who were reportedly recruited.

"If we can prove that they went out of what they were supposed to do, it would be possible that their certificate would be revoked," Duremdes said.

Despite its legal stature, the government arm Mindanao Economic Development Council (Medco) repeatedly rang the alarm against Bedco's activities.

And so did the Young Moro Professionals Network Inc. (YMPN) and Maradeka, two of Mindanao's prominent Bangsamoro groups.

Baibonn Sangid, YMPN president, said there is much reason for the entire Bangsamoro community to be offended by the group's use of the term Bangsamoro.

"It is very disrespectful and annoying... We urge this group to stop capitalizing (on) the impoverished condition of the Moro people. They must stop using 'Bangsamoro' as a ticket for money-making ventures," Nashreen Pangadapun, Maradeka secretary general, said.

Bedco documents show that on Aug. 23, the group sent President Macapagal-Arroyo a letter asking her to do something for the release of the fund for proposed livelihood projects for the "upliftment of the Bangsamoro people in the rural/depressed areas in Mindanao, amounting to $7.5 billion through Dr. Ahmed Mohammad Ali, president of the Islamic Development Bank (Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)."

Billions

Another letter, also signed by Buhisan, was requesting the President to "intercede and expedite the release of financial assistance from the OIC-IDB in the amount of $250 billion (and the $7.5 billion) which will be deposited in PNB-Davao account number 385-830995-5."

"The financial assistance is very much needed today... it will be exclusively used for livelihood, development, housing, agro-industrial and education," the letter signed by Buhisan said.

Datu Sami Asikam, the group's coordinator for the Indigenous People in Southern Mindanao, said their Malacañang liaison was a Gen. Elly Convocar.

Convocar, he said, is "*malakas sa* (influential in) Malacañang."

But INQUIRER sources in the Palace said there was no Convocar in Malacañang.

Yo Montenegro, Medco's chief economic development specialist, said they have been receiving inquiries about Bedco and its affiliation with Medco.

"It must be noted that Bedco is not in any way, formally or informally, associated with Medco and therefore, all its activities and transactions are not sanctioned by Medco or by any known government entity or foreign donor organization/agency," Montenegro said.

Montenegro said the only interaction Medco had with Bedco was when the agency received copies of project proposals submitted by the group to various national offices. The proposals have since been referred back to Bedco for further validation and substantiation, he said.

"Please be forewarned. Let us not take this sitting down. Already, we have lost our homeland, do we allow the identity of the Moro to be tarnished as well?" Sangid added.

With reports from Joselle Badilla, PDI Mindanao Bureau

GIRLS in Jolo, Sulu, play native instruments for the arrival of US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone. The US government and various other groups provide funds for Mindanao projects, but an alert has been put out for a group calling itself Bedco which is turning out to be a scam.

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New system of learning adopted for tribes

By Germelina Lacorte
Davao City

LEADERS of over 47 indigenous tribes nationwide are fighting to save their dying culture by helping put up alternative schools that seek to strengthen their way of life.

As the first batch of graduates leave elementary in the next two years, tribal leaders like Higaonon Datu Tony Lumandong of Misamis Oriental look forward to seeing a similar indigenous high school put up.

In his town, the Higaonon way of life is fading fast. Most of the Higaonons already speak the settlers' language (Bisaya) and are adopting the settlers' way of life.

"Most of the children even grow up ashamed of their own tradition," said Benny Cumatang, also a Higaonon, in Mintapud, Impasug-ong town of Bukidnon.

"It's only in indigenous schools like the School of Indigenous Knowledge and Tradition (Sikat) that our children begin to appreciate what we have," says Lumandong in a tribal leaders forum here recently.

Native learning

Instead of typical schoolteachers who rely heavily on Western-oriented textbooks, Sikat teachers are tribal youths themselves who draw out learning from tribal wise men, elders and *baylans* (tribal priests or priestesses) in their own communities, according to Al Santos, executive director of the Asian Council on Peoples' Cultures (ACPC).

Sikat currently runs 12 elementary schools in different tribal communities nationwide, from the T'bolis of Lake Sebu to the Higaonons in Misamis Oriental and the Aetas in two Mt. Pinatubo resettlement areas in Zambales, he said.

"Education is [too] critical to be left in the hands of the few," said Santos, who believes that the Department of Education's curriculum could never answer the educational needs of the tribes, whose demand to practice their own system of education is closely linked to their unresolved ancestral domain claims.

The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) ensures that indigenous tribes get to practice their own customs and beliefs within their ancestral domain.

"In each tribal community, the Sikat curriculum is designed to suit the needs of the people," Santos said. "For government to design the IP curriculum for them only defeats the very concept of indigenous education."

Increasing population

At present, Sikat serves over 700 students nationwide, but this number is expected to reach 2,500 in two years, said Santos.

"We plan to set up at least four Sikat schools in each of the country's 47 provinces, where there are indigenous people around," he said.

In the future, the indigenous schools will create a pool of IP professionals, who will love their own language and rich heritage, and give what they learned back to the people, Santos said.

The local government shoulders 60 percent of the cost of each Sikat school project, while the ACPC shoulders 40 percent.

Funds are now being raised for the first Sikat high school that will be set up as soon as the first batch of Sikat graduates leave elementary school in the next two years, Santos said.

Lumandong said the "dominant culture" of the settlers in Mindanao and the pervasive influence of TV and other forms of mass media are stripping his own tribe of their own way of life.

"Some of our children, who feel different, are ashamed of what they are," he said.

Facing extinction

Like the B'laans, the Bagobos, the Manobos and the Bukidnons, the Higaonons are among the country's 110 ethnic tribes whose cultures and traditions are facing extinction, according to ACPC.

Even the country's educational system reinforces the IP children's feeling of alienation, with its English-language textbooks and the different culture that the system brings.

"You cannot expect all IP children to be multilingual," said Santos.

"In South Cotabato, for instance, where the dominant language is Ilonggo, a T'boli girl has to translate her thoughts from T'boli to Ilonggo when she enters school. Then, she has to translate her thoughts again to Tagalog and English when she opens her textbooks. Language skills are not the sole basis of intelligence," Santos said.

"On top of this, our T'boli student has to deal with a new culture in school totally different from the one she finds at home," he said.

So, while they also teach the 3Rs here, the Sikat schools use the indigenous peoples' language as the medium of instruction, says Santos.

In Lake Sebu, for instance, students are learning things in their own T'boli language, and with it, the whole set of tribal rituals and practices they grow up with, says Maria Todi Wanan, who is in charge of the Lake Sebu Sikat school.

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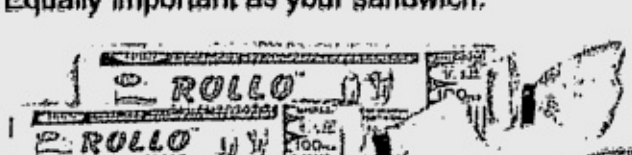

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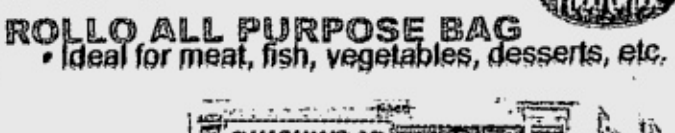

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Editor Ester G. Dipasupil ■ Assistant Editor Cenon B. Bibe

Alert bus driver foils Xmas Eve bombing

By Leila B. Salaverria and Alcuin Papa

ROUTINE can be boring, but it can save lives.

At 7:45 p.m. on Christmas Eve, Friday, Felix Embernace, driver of a G Liner passenger bus, was checking on his unit when he found a black backpack under one of the seats in the middle portion of the vehicle.

The bus was then parked along the northbound lane of Quezon Boulevard in Quiapo, Manila, while waiting for passengers and getting ready for its trip to Cainta, Rizal. It was near C.M. Recto Avenue and the Sta. Cruz station of the Western Police District.

No owner

According to the police, Embernace asked passengers who owned the bag but no one claimed it.

Feeling suspicious, the driver inspected the bag by feeling its contents and found it heavy and containing what seemed like a box.

Embernace then asked passengers to get off while he sought the help of police.

Members of the Western Police District Explosives and Ordnance Division (EOD) later found a bomb inside the bag.

A ranking member of the EOD said a bomb-sniffing dog was sent up the bus and it sat beside the suspicious backpack, indicating that it contained explosives.

EOD operatives then sprang into action and the bomb was "rendered safe," meaning its detonation device was removed while leaving the device intact for further scrutiny.

Dismantled

At the EOD office at the WPD headquarters, bomb experts dismantled the explosive device to give them a clue as to who could have planted it on the bus.

Embernace told police that he noticed a male passenger who got on at Lawton and got off in Quiapo, just across the Quezon bridge over the Pasig River and less than a kilometer from where he boarded.

An explosives expert from the National Police told the INQUIRER that the bomb was made up of TNT powder, possibly taken from unexploded mortar shells.

The timing device used was an old countdown timer, the ordnance expert said. He, however, could not say what time it was set to go off.

Another source from the WPD said the bomb contained two kilos of explosive powder, which he added could have created a highly deadly blast inside the airconditioned bus.

The composition of the bomb was confirmed by another source from the PNP. The source added that the bomb's signature, or distinctive marks in its construction, was similar to the explosive devices which Al-Qaeda member Ramzi Yousef taught members of the Abu Sayyaf Group to make in the 1990s.

Circa 1995

"The signature of the bomb is circa 1995 and is very rare. Crushed TNT is now used only by dynamite fishermen," the source said.

The source added, "Bombs of this kind originate from Mindanao. The signature fits into devices used by the Abu Sayyaf Group which were taught to them by Yousef."

In 1995, police securing the visit of Roman Catholic Pontiff Pope John Paul II stumbled on a bomb-making factory run by Yousef after a fire hit a unit of the Josefa Apartments in Malate, Manila, where the Al-Qaeda member had set up shop.

Yousef managed to flee the country but was arrested in Pakistan.

Abu Sayyaf mentor

Intelligence reports have said that Yousef trained members of the Abu Sayyaf in explosives before he was arrested. Details of the training given by Yousef to the ASG was discovered inside his Malate apartment.

The Abu Sayyaf is a terrorist group that was involved in high-profile kidnappings of local and foreign tourists in the 1990s.

The discovery of the bomb came two days after the police in Manila were put on alert for the burial of movie actor and former presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez had announced that there were intelligence reports that some groups would use the burial as a launching pad to destabilize the government of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Visitors create festive atmosphere at NBP

IN JAIL but not forgotten.

Close to 5,000 visitors who have trooped to the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa City created a fiesta-like atmosphere at the penitentiary, said officer-in-charge Insp. Emilio Tupaz.

He said it was heartwarming to see inmates enjoying Christmas with their families.

He said several nongovernment organizations had also been present to give gifts to prisoners, who received slippers, food, shirts and soap.

Among those who came were ABS-CBN broadcaster Pinky Webb and actress Pinky de Leon who visited their kin, Hubert Webb.

According to Tupaz, Christmas is the only occasion when conjugal visits are allowed by Bureau of Corrections Director Vicente Vinarao. *Nancy C. Carvajal*

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PERALTA. Tagged by victim's sons. JOAN BONDOC

Suspect in cop's killing arrested

By Luige A. del Puerto

THE POLICE arrested Friday night the primary suspect in last Thursday's killing of a police officer in Pasig City.

"We arrested the suspect just minutes before the traditional Noche Buena," city police chief Sr. Supt. Raul Medina said over the phone.

Suspect Chris Peralta, 25, of Barangay Rosario, Pasig, had been hiding in Barangay Palatiw, also in the city, since dawn Thursday, when four men shot and killed PO3 Florencio Antolin inside a passenger jeep, according to Medina.

"The suspect was positively identified by the victim's two sons as the same person who shot their father," Medina said.

Medina added that the suspect was traced through the "grapevine"—meaning through informants.

Acting on a tip, the police raided a house in Palatiw at about 11 p.m. Friday, and arrested Peralta.

He did not resist arrest, Medina said.

PO3 Florencio Antolin, 45, fetched his sons, Fernando and Francisco, 20 and 18 respectively, from a bus terminal in Quezon City just a few hours into Thursday.

The sons had just arrived from Cagayan. The police said that like most fathers, Antolin wanted to be with his sons during the holidays.

The trio then took a bus to Edsa Crossing, where they rode a jeepney, on their way to Barangay Pinagbuhatan in Pasig City.

When they reached the Rizal Medical Center on Pasig Boulevard, the robbers declared the heist and directed the jeepney driver to turn right to a small road.

The robbers had flanked Antolin on his left and right sides.

Quoting Antolin's surviving sons, Medina said the officer promptly reacted and tried to reach for his gun.

"The robbers shot him. Not contented with that, they also stabbed him several times," Medina said.

After divesting the other passengers of their belongings, the robbers fled toward Kalaayan Avenue in Makati City.

Antolin's sons rushed him to the Rizal Medical Center where he was declared dead on arrival.

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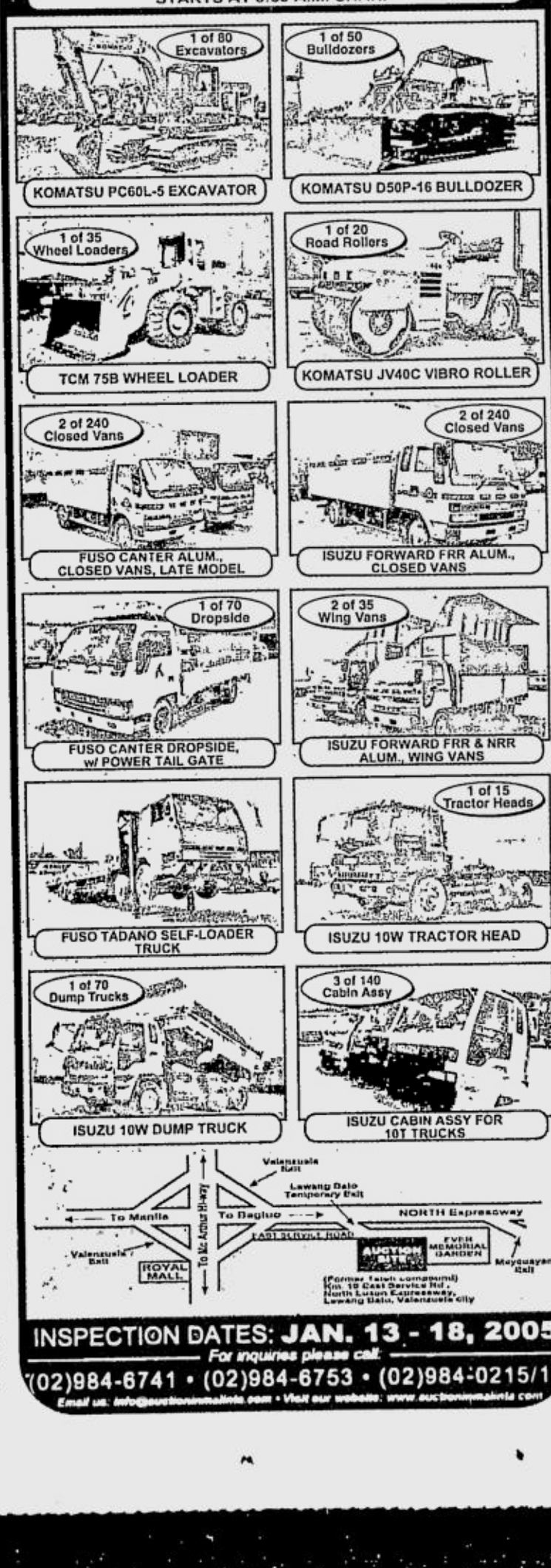

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Rizal Park tree: East meets West

By Tarra V. Quismundo

LIKE a monument to the traditional Filipino Christmas celebration, a Christmas tree—albeit a borrowed symbol from the West—stands tall in the heart of the capital.

Sharing a place for heroes at the Rizal Park in Manila is the 42-foot Paskong Pinoy Tree, the centerpiece of the tourism department's Paskong Pinoy program.

It was unveiled on Dec. 1 at the park's western half, a few meters from the Rizal Park lagoon and aligned with the monument of national hero Jose Rizal.

The unveiling highlighted the Department of Tourism's Christmas celebration that included a monthlong array of concerts and cultural performances in the sprawling park grounds.

"It is unique because the decorations are native materials, not like the others which are hi-tech. It looks nice," said 39-year-old Roberto Alonsabe, who brought his wife, daughter and year-old twins to the park Friday from their hometown of Bacoor, Cavite, to celebrate Christmas.

The tree, funded by telecommunications giant Globe Telecom, was erected, assembled and decorated for a full month at its site in the Rizal Park, through the handiwork of exhibit design and fabrication firm X-habit Inc.

"We used indigenous materials from the bottom up. We bought materials from local markets like Divisoria, where there is a concentration of native materials," said project manager Ito Rivera.

Covering the tree's 18-foot wide base are various sizes of *bilao*, which are round, native containers made of bamboo strips.

CHILDREN check out the unique Christmas tree on the Rizal Park grounds that provides a native treat to park goers. ERIK ARAZAS

On the layer above these were placed large anahaw fans, followed by a layer of darker-colored native fruit trays.

The second layer on top was covered in *banig*, a native mat, providing a fitting ascent to the tree top sealed with dried *talahib* leaves.

Lively colored *parol* or star lanterns were also hung around the tree.

The layers' shades of abaca-to-chocolate brown gave the tree's body a unique monochromatic color, while its decor gave it simple but playful hints of color, not seen in typical western Christmas trees decorated by mostly shiny metal or plastic decor.

Karaoke sparks gas blast

By Tina G. Santos

A 19-YEAR-OLD woman was severely burned when a spark from a karaoke machine caused a gas leak inside her home in Caloocan City to ignite.

Police said Angelita Torio was preparing for their Christmas celebration at about 4 p.m. Friday when liquefied petroleum gas that had been leaking from a defective gas tank exploded.

Torio, of Daang Bakal Street, Barangay 56, suffered second degree burns and was taken to the President Diosdado Macapagal Memorial Center for treatment.

Investigation showed that the gas tank in the house had developed a leak and that gas had accumulated inside the poorly ventilated house.

While reportedly preparing for their celebration, Torio thought of turning on their karaoke.

The machine was reportedly unplugged so the woman connected it to a power outlet.

However, a spark was reportedly created while she was inserting the plug into the socket.

Police said the gas exploded and threw Torio a few feet away onto the floor, badly burned.

The incident prompted authorities to reiterate earlier warnings and remind the public against buying cheaper but usually defective LPG tanks.

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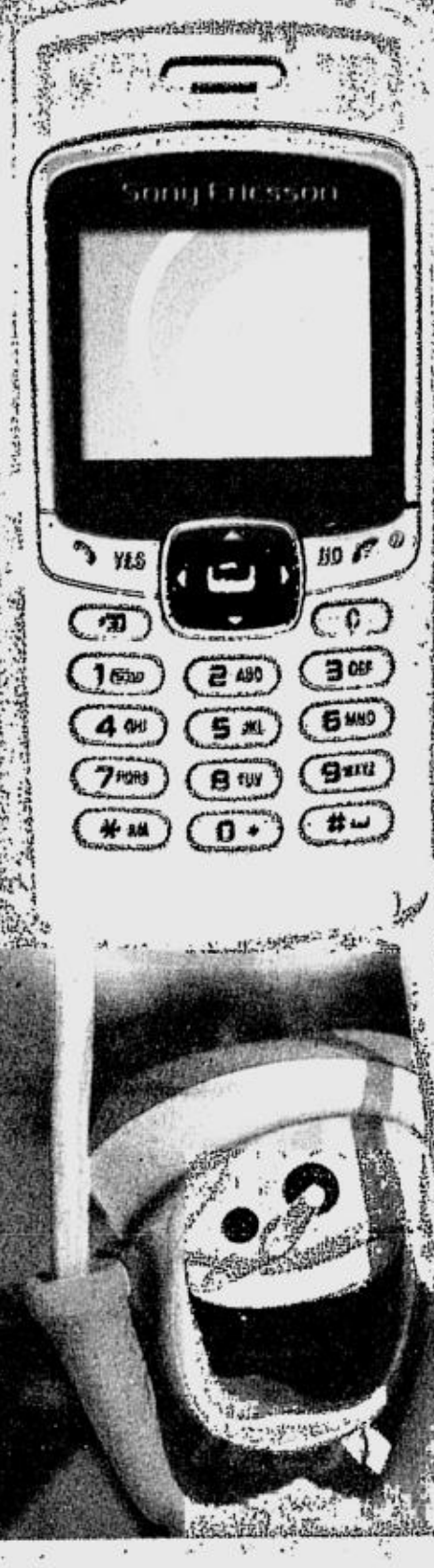

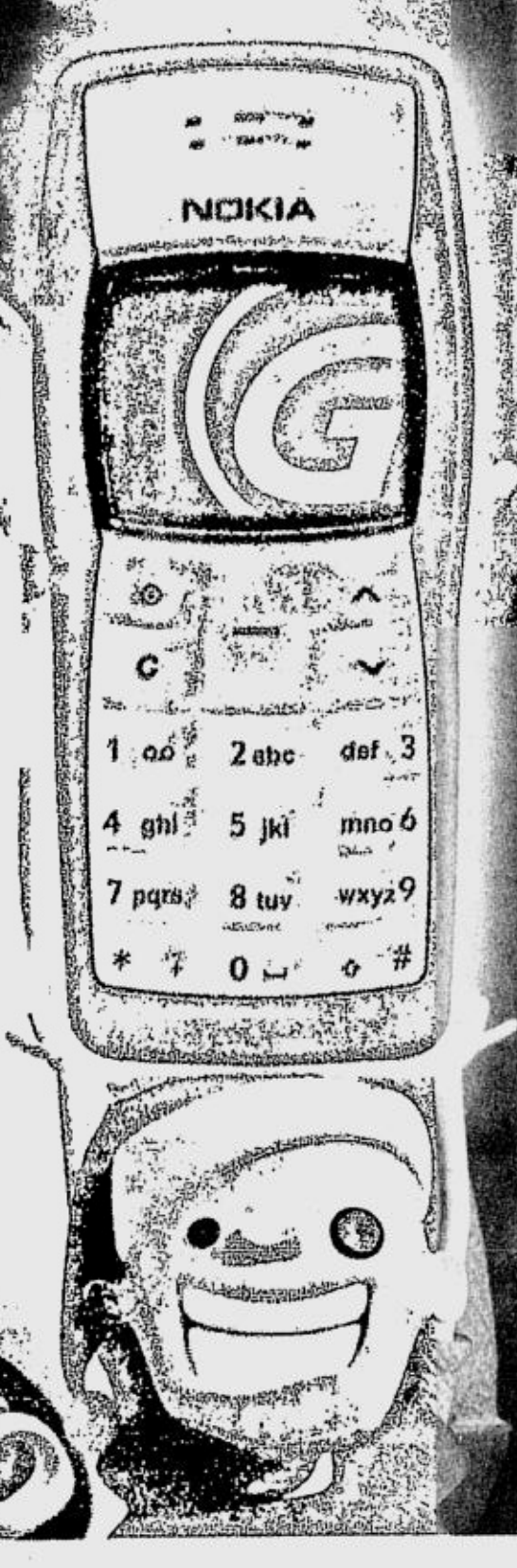

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SPORTS TV

Compiled by Lorenzo Mangulat

BASKETBALL: NBA-Pistons vs Pacers; 10 a.m.; Solar Sports (r-9 p.m.) and RPN 9—Detroit and Indiana meet for the first time since the fateful Nov. 19 meeting.
TENNIS: US Open 2004; 12:30 p.m.; STAR Sports—Take another look at the semifinal battle between Lindsay Davenport and Svetlana Kuznetsova.
FOOTBALL: EPL; 8:50 p.m.; STAR Sports; 11 p.m.; ESPN—Arsenal collides with Fulham while Manchester United battles the Bolton Wanderers.
Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

Firms not ready to back SEAG

By Marc Anthony Reyes

EXCEPT for the funds, everything appears to be in order for the country's hosting of the 2005 Southeast Asian Games.

With only 10 months left to the Games, the organizing committee is still looking for sources of money to finance the country's third hosting of the 11-nation, biennial Games.

Philsoc secretary general Steve Hontiveros said they are in the process of finalizing the guidelines for sponsorships for the Nov. 27 to Dec. 5, 2005 SEA Games with the help of a Malaysia-based marketing firm.

He expressed optimism that the country can produce the P800-million estimated cost to host the 41 sports disciplines that will be held in Metro Manila, Subic, Bacolod City and Cebu City.

However, some Philsoc officials are worried over the marketing strategy since there have been no reports yet of corporations that showed willingness to fund the Games.

They said the marketing ploy may not be able to cover even half of the expenses and that it would eventually be the government that will be left shouldering the lion's share of hosting the biennial meet.

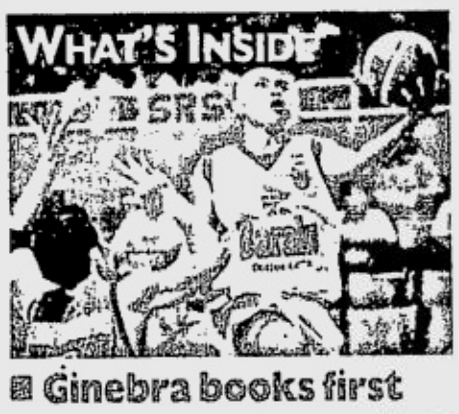
The government is counted upon to help chip in for the expenses through government-owned and controlled corporations and government financing institutions.

But although these firms have committed to help, they haven't announced any amount they were ready to shell out.

Last week, Philsoc chair Obet Pagdanganan toyed with the idea of slashing the number of sports disciplines to cut some expenses but this ploy may not get the nod of the SEAG Federation which had already formalized the calendar last November.

According to SEAG Federation rules, the calendar of events must be finalized exactly a year before the meet so that member-nations can get ample time to prepare.

In place of this, Pagdanganan said the number of events per sport—now pegged at a total 388—could be increased instead.



■ Ginebra books first outright semis slot /A18

■ Skid puzzles Tortillos /A19

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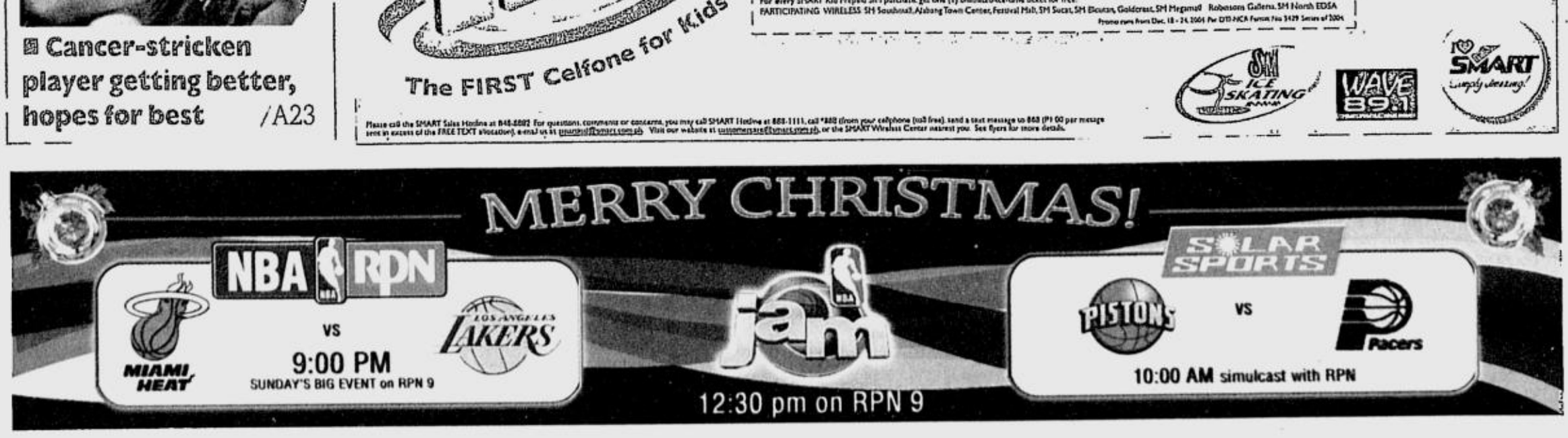

Godfather needed to save volley–Bernardino

By Musong R. Castillo

VOLLEYBALL needs a godfather. Soon.

Jun Bernardino feels that a patron to take care of the national volleyball program can be the solution to the country's woes in the sport, especially with the Southeast Asian Games in Manila coming.

"How I wish, sooner than later, that we'll be able to find a godfather who will give us the necessary boost," Bernardino said yesterday, sharing the sentiments of Tats Suzara.

Suzara blasted the Philippine Amateur Volleyball Association (Pava) on Friday for not being able to come up with a solid program that would make players of international caliber for the country.

"It's understandable to read something like that," Bernardino said. "Especially from someone who knows the sport inside and out."

Bernardino, who together with Moying Martelino organized the Shakey's V League, is chipping in his share to revive the interest in volleyball in the country.

The league's second conference has in fact taken a theme of "bringing back the glory," which Bernardino said is also aimed for the SEAG in December next year.

"We have to make an impact in the SEA Games next year, with the country hosting the event and all," the former PBA Commissioner said. "The talent is there, we just have to be able to push the right buttons."

"We came up with the idea (of the V League) in order for us to bring back the glory, and what better time to rally an entire country behind one team than next year (in the SEA Games)."

"But it will not be easy doing this," Bernardino said. "I'm sure Tats (Suzara) knows that we are pressed for time, given the fact that we have less than a year left to prepare."

Suzara is a member of the world governing International Volleyball Federation's development committee and was the Pava's secretary-general the last time the Philippines won a gold medal in the SEAG.

"That was more than 10 years ago, and look at the players that we have," Suzara said. "By this time, we should have players who are better than the old ones, but it's not the case."

Bernardino knows that a godfather program will work, considering that he was in the PBA when Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco took up the cudgels for basketball and won numerous international titles for the country.

That program also produced the likes of Hector Calma, Samboy Lim and Allan Caidic, to name a few, who made it all the way to the list of the PBA's 25 Greatest Players.

Suzara made his comments after the PSC team, made up of supposed hasbeens who have been out of the sport for so long, suprisingly managed to rack up a 4-2 record in the V-League despite playing against the top players in the country today.

BERNARDINO: Push the right buttons. PDI PHOTO

Ginebra books first outright semis slot

RED BULL guard Jimwell Torion soars for a lay-up against San Miguel gunner Dondon Hontiveros in yesterday's game. ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

GAMES JAN. 5 (*Philsports Arena*)
4:30 p.m.—Coca-Cola vs FedEx
7:20 p.m.—Alaska vs Sta. Lucia Realty

By June Navarro

ANDY Seigle gave Barangay Ginebra die-hards something to cheer about this Christmas by sparking the Gin Kings to a 108-102 win over Talk 'N Text before an overflow crowd in the Gran Matador PBA Philippine Cup last night at the Cuneta Astrodome.

Seigle successfully challenged the foul-saddled big men of the Phone Pals in the paint, banging in 10 of his 15 points in the final period as the Gin Kings went on to finish their elimination stint on top of the standings.

By closing out their 18-game elimination schedule with a victory, the Gin Kings will automatically advance to the semifinal round, which will mean bypassing the wildcard phase and the best-of-three quarterfinals.

The Gin Kings wrapped up the preliminary round of the eliminations with a 13-5 record, a full game ahead of the Phone Pals and the Shell Turbochargers (12-6), who will dispute the second semifinal seat in a one-game playoff.

"It's been a good year for Barangay Ginebra," said Kings coach Siot Tanquincen.

In the first game of yesterday's jampacked Christmas doubleheader, Nic Belasco torched the hoops with 27 points and grabbed 22 rebounds to help San Miguel stave off rampaging Red Bull, 92-78.

It was the second time this conference that Belasco posted 20-20 figures in points and rebounds. Belasco is one of two players who accomplished the feat this conference, the other being Eric Menk of Barangay Ginebra.

Jayjay Helterbrand scored a career-high 33 points and actually kept the Gin Kings in fighting mood throughout, but it was the heroics of the 6-foot-9 Seigle in the shaded area that doomed the Phone Pals.

Seigle unabashedly burst into tears just seconds away from the final buzzer.

Jimmy Alapag had a career-high 39 points and eight three-pointers for the Phone Pals.

The Scores:

First game

SAN MIGUEL 92—Belasco 27, Hontiveros 13, Racela 11, Ildefonso 11, Seigle 10, Peña 10, Singson 8, Mente 2, Gamboa 0, Villoria 0.

RED BULL BARAKO 78—Bagulo 20, Tugade 17, Bernardo 10, Villanueva 6, Asaytono 6, Torion 6, Rodriguez 5, Valenzuela 5, Alvarez 3, Lopez 0, Robinson 0, Agapito 0.

Quarters: 27-21, 48-40, 69-55, 92-78.

Second game

GINEBRA 108—Helterbrand 33, Caguioa 22, Menk 17, Seigle 14, Salvacion 6, Santos 6, Adducul 5, Noble 4, Valenzuela 0, Dimaunahan 0.

TALK 'N TEXT 102—Alapag 39, Miller 24, De Ocampo 15, Telan 12, Fran 6, Pablo 6, Salangsang 0, Ravena 0, Camaso 0, Belano 0.

Quarters: 20-20, 42-48-79-80, 108-102.

SPORTSWATCH

Tabada, Sepulveda rule Cebu Chess

JOBANNIE Tabada and Victor Sepulveda defeated their respective rivals to emerge champions in the two tournaments of the Cebu Executives and Professionals Chess Association (Cepca) recently at the Handuraw Learning and Leisure Café in Cebu City. Tabada, top 10 in the 1999 Grand Asian Chess Challenge in Malaysia took the scalp of Dante Arguelles in the championship match to win first prize in the year-ender Cepca Grand Finals Tournament, which featured champions of the monthly Cepca tournaments. Sepulveda on the other hand trounced Danny Pestaño in the final round to take the Cepca December Tournament, which was open to all non-finalists. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

MCC active chess kicks off

THE METROPOLITAN Chess Club (MCC) Executive Category I and II active chess tournament reels off at 1 p.m. on Dec. 30, with National Chess Federation of the Philippines (NCFP) vice president and Primanila Plans Inc. CEO/ President Eduardo Madrid sponsoring the top prizes. The event kicks off at the club's headquarters located at the 4/F of J&F Divino Bldg. near LRT 2 Anonas Station in Quezon City. The event organized by MCC founding chair/ president and former Olympian WNM Mila Emperado, also the public relations officer and director of the NCFP. The tournament offers a top prize of P5,000 for Category 1 and P7,000. For inquiries, call MCC at 4358412 and 09168521069. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

Beach volley invades Golf Power

"GOLF POWER" today, resumes its special feature on the Toyota Balintawak Women's Beach Volleyball Challenge with two exciting matches in the elimination round. University of Asia and the Pacific plays against College of St. Benilde 2 in the collegiate division and Philippine Air Force faces Philippine Air Force 2 in the open division. The matches were played at the beach volleyball court of the Cantada Sports Center in Taguig. The beach volleyball event will be covered by sportscaster Ed Picson and sports analyst Quinito Henson. "GOLF POWER" is aired every Sunday at 3 p.m. on RPN-9 and is followed by the popular boxing show "Samsung's Fistorama" at 4 p.m. Fistorama is brought to you by Samsung, Tanduay Rhum, Mapecon and PCSO.

New fight show unwraps

A NEW boxing program featuring upcoming Mindanao boxers will soon air over NBN 4. "Battle Royale," hosted by North Cotabato Governor Manny F. Piñol will have its maiden telecast at 8 p.m. on Jan. 2 and will be aired regularly every Sunday thereafter. The initial telecast will feature the fight between WBC No. 8 Flyweight Diosdado "Prince" Gabi of Davao City and Saensakk Singmanasak of Thailand. Gabi recorded an impressive win during the fight held at the Lantawan Hall of the Royal Mandaya Hotel in Davao City December 19, knocking out Singmanasuk at 1:34 in the second round.

Gonzales-Contiga on Ringside

FORMER Philippine junior flyweight champion Eugene Gonzales displays his fighting prowess anew when he meets Dante Contiga in today's Ginebra San Miguel's Ringside TV Boxing from 3-4 pm over ABC-5. The scheduled 10-round battle is presented by Galorde Enterprises and ABC-5, and will be beam to the United States through Mabuhay Channel. As an added attraction, hosts Havy Bagatsing and Luis Zabaljauregui will feature well-known American boxing trainer Freddie Roach. Roach, 2003 best trainer awardee, visited Manila recently and guided People's Featherweight king Manny Pacquiao to a devastating 4th round knockout win against Thai Fahsang 3K Battery at The Fort.

Hawaii QB sets yardstick

HONOLULU—Timmy Chang capped his record-setting career in style.

Chang became the first college quarterback to pass for 17,000 yards, throwing for four touchdowns and running for another to lead Hawaii over Alabama-Birmingham, 59-40, in the Hawaii Bowl on Friday night.

The senior went 31-of-46 for 405 yards with no interceptions, spoiling the Blazers' first trip to a bowl game. Chad Owens caught eight passes for 114 yards and two TDs for Hawaii (8-5), which made its third straight appearance in the 3-year-old bowl.

Owens also scored on a 59-yard punt return in the decisive third quarter, and teammate Jason Rivers added 11 receptions for 148 yards and a TD.

Clinging to a two-point lead, Hawaii scored 17 straight points in the third to take a 45-26 lead. UAB (7-5) never recovered.

A 15-yard pass by Chang to Owens widened Hawaii's lead in the third and made Chang the first college quarterback to break the 17,000-yard mark for his career.

Chang's 4-yard TD run in the fourth sealed the victory. He came out to a standing ovation with 5:40 left.

Chang threw for 4,258 yards this season, with a career-best 38 TDs. He was 19-of-27 for 308 yards and three TDs in the first half of this one.

UAB was led by quarterback Darrell Hackney, who finished 31-of-54 for 417 yards and two touchdowns. He also had a rushing TD.

Roddy White, the second-leading receiver in the nation, had six receptions for 113 yards.

Both high-powered offenses got off to a quick start on a 75-degree Fahrenheit (24-degree Celsius) Christmas Eve, scoring five touchdowns in the first 10 minutes of the game.

The win was the Warriors' eighth straight at Aloha Stadium, though they were designated the visiting team for this game. *AP*

Badminton Hub offers new concept

WHILE there has been a steady increase in first-class courts and facilities that boosts the popularity of badminton, players continue to look for a one-stop shop where everything they need is available.

Badminton Hub hopes to provide the missing link to the badminton boom.

Now creating a stir in the new Greenbelt 4 in Makati, Badminton Hub offers not just wide selection of badminton-related goods ranging from rackets to shuttlecocks and apparel but other interesting products and services that makes it the first specialty shop for the sport in the country.

Apart from Yonex, the other popular brands such as Mizuno, Kason, Victor Dunlop-Carlton as well as emerging brands like Chao Pai and Sotx are among those on sale at the Badminton Hub and the pricing is always competitive.

Badminton Hub, however, is not merely a store that offers equipment. It will soon have other unique services available for badminton enthusiasts. The store already posts tournament schedules and details on a billboard to keep players updated on the latest happenings.

MAKATI Mayor Jejomar Binay (middle) and siblings Kennie (second from right) and Kennevic Asuncion (right) cut the ceremonial ribbon as former Mayor Prospero Oreta, Tony Yap, Melody dela Cruz look on.

Store owners Tony Yap, Dino Angeles and Melody Dela Cruz came up with this idea after a long period of research and part of it is attending trade fairs abroad where they discussed the concept with suppliers.

The true giver

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

THE DAY after, the kid was torn between heeding what had been told him by his father the day before and playing basketball with his new basketball.

"Please, son, don't play basketball tomorrow," said his father to him. "Help your mother and sisters do the chores at home. Obey me, and the boy in the manger will take note."

The kid knew who the boy in the manger was—his namesake, Jesus.

"Can I play basketball even for only 30 minutes?" the kid, who turned eight on Dec. 25, pleaded first thing in the morning.

"No, son," said his father. "The boy in the manger will be happier than me if you obey me."

The kid remembered what his mother told him about the boy in the manger.

"But mother said the boy in the manger personifies everything good in the world," said the kid. "Will the boy consider my playing basketball today bad?"

"Yes," father said. "For that would mean you will disobey me."

"But playing basketball isn't bad," the kid argued. "He won't mind."

"You are right, son," father said. "Playing basketball isn't bad. What is bad is, when you disobey my wish for you not to play basketball today. The boy in the manger will mind."

The kid pursued his case. He went to his mother.

"Mother, please request father to allow me to play basketball today," said the kid.

Like most mothers, mother obliged.

"Please, let Jesus play basketball today," mother said to father. "Thirty minutes of play won't hurt."

"But I'm only trying to instill discipline in our son," said father. "I told him yesterday he can't play basketball today because he needs to help in the chores at home."

"C'mon, don't be a KJ, dear," mother said to father. "You know, he just got his basketball. He's as excited as the kid next door who got a bike this Christmas. New toys are a thrill to kids."

It was then that the kid's two sisters came. Unknown to the couple, Jesus also went to his sisters to plead his case.

After some debate, the issue was put to a vote. Again, father lost, 3-1.

But to prove once more that father isn't a poor sport, he called out Jesus and broke the news himself to the kid: "OK, son, you won. You can play basketball. Thirty minutes."

Three things stand out here: 1) We can only request; to impose, to order, isn't a harmonious thing in a family. 2) We can always appeal, plead; sometimes, appealing, pleading, can unearth reason, open up doors. 3) We can sometimes win a battle (30 minutes of playing time for the kid—a win for the father) but not the war (disallowing the kid to play basketball—a loss for the father).

Father's main argument: "The kid got his Christmas wish—the basketball. Wouldn't it be just fair if I got my wish, too—that he can't play basketball today?"

If we give and expect something in return, that's not giving. That's trading. Business.

I'm not original but I do know that the business of giving is giving. And, like the unknown soldier, the true giver is the unknown. Anonymous. Stranger.

YEAR'S LAST MAJOR RACE

Red Star Rising, Sexiest head cast

By Edwin Villanueva, *Contributor*

RED Star Rising will set out to defend the crown in the Philracom Classic Open Championship today at the Santa Ana Park.

But just like in the recent Presidential Gold Cup where he could only finish third, the pride of father-and-son duo of Francis and Michael Trillana is facing a wall of obstacles in the year's last major racing event.

Although PGC winner Empire King is not running, razor-sharp sexiest, "heartbreak kid" West Bound, highly-touted import American Woman and never-say-die Lyonnais are in the elite 13-horse cast competing over the rigorous 2,050-meter journey.

The distance may favor Red Star Rising as well as the acquisition of star jockey Fernando "Dhunoy" Raquel Jr. as his new partner but the top weight of 59 kilos, one more than what he carried in the PGC two weeks ago, may yet hamper the bid of the Khoza-am-Ito's Choice progeny.

"*Tingnan natin pero malaki ang tiwala ko sa kabayong ito* (Let's see but I believe in this horse a lot)," said Raquel, tapped in lieu of Manolito Daquis who opted to mount Sexiest.

Aside from the Sandy Javier and Karen Montelibano-owned Sexiest, also tipped to vie strongly for the P1 million first prize are West Bound, who for the second straight year lost the PGC by a nose; Lyonnais and American Woman.

Likewise entered are Hermie Esguerra's three imports Real Slew, Neat Laurel and Crystal Show; West Bound's coupled bet Cover Girl, Don Juan Derby winner Don Paolo, Being There, Suonos and Stowaway Lass.

"This race is Philracom's way of saying thank you to all the industry's various sectors and the *bayang karerista* who have stood tirelessly behind us," said Philracom boss Jimmy Dilag, adding that the runnerup in the race gets P376,750, with the third and fourth placers receiving P209,250 and P84,000, respectively.

Sexiest, by Bite the Bullet out of Gainesville, is currently on a 4-race winning binge. The light 53.5 kilos assigned on her may prove to be a plus factor aside from the fact that this Javier homebred runner is capable of either stalking the pacesetters or launching searing rallies.

After ruling the Legend Cup last Nov. 7, Sexiest went on to win the Grand Imported Championship (Nov. 21), William Inglis and Son Cup (Nov. 28) and warmed up in the Class Division (Dec. 11) for today's outing.

Eldy Salvador is once more handling West Bound, who also lost to Red Star Rising in this event last year. "*Baka sakali makalusot na* (Hopefully, he'll make it this time)," said Salvador.

Val Dilema will be up anew on American Woman, the 5-year-old mare who claimed two eye-popping wins in the class divisions.

The nimble-footed American Woman, a daughter of Honour and Glory, is expected to clash for the early lead with Don Paolo, Being There and Crystal Show.

Lyonnais, the oldest in the lineup at 6, is again counting on experience and big fighting heart, attributes that carried him to the recent Marho Breeders' Cup Classic title.

Skid puzzles Tortillos

Granny Goose hopes to turn things around

By Jasmine W. Payo

AFTER a scorching start, Marvin Cruz and the rest of the Tortillos seem to be caught in a free fall which they hope to end soon. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

WHEN the core of Granny Goose Tortillos return from their break in Cebu, they know they have to turn things around or they could end up watching their team fizzle out in the PBL Open tournament.

"We really can't pinpoint (the problem). I wish we knew," said Tortillos team manager Pat Aquino.

The league newcomer surprised everyone with their successful run in the first round. With no seasoned players in their roster, the Tortillos finished on top with a 6-1 record by stunning several powerhouse lineups including Montaña Pawnshop, Welcoat Paints and defending champion Magnolia-FEU.

The once promising team, however, is fading in the second round. Unable to sustain their strong start, the Tortillos rolled to an alarming four-game losing skid that brought them down to third place.

And league observers seem to have one question in mind: Had Granny Goose peaked too early?

"I hope not," said Aquino. "We've been really working hard telling the boys to step up and that the pressure that we're experiencing now is part of it."

Aquino added that the Tortillos' unknown roster used to be an advantage, but they apparently can't bank on it now. "*Hindi pa kasi kami kilala noon*," he noted. "But you know how the other teams are in the PBL, they make adjustments."

Magnolia-FEU coach Koy Banal shared the same observation: "We didn't know their key players (from Cebu) like (Dennis) Concha, (Jet) Latonio and (Ardy) Larong. *Pero napag-aralan na namin sila*."

Changes are definitely in order. For instance, Granny Goose needs to ignite its offense again to halt its winless streak. In the first round, the team shot well at 45.3 percent from the field. But that dropped to 37.8 in the last four games.

Aquino, however, revealed that the Tortillos have been working double time to get back in top form. "Definitely there will be adjustments in our game plan," he said. "We've also been having tryouts. We need a more mature point guard."

Aquino is optimistic that that team can rebound. "I really hope we could adjust in time."

Tanauan chess on

THE 1ST Tanauan Chess Open-Mayor's Cup, the country's richest Active Chess tournament ever, will be held on March 4-5, 2005 at the Speaker Jose B. Laurel Memorial Gymnasium in Tanauan City.

The two-day tournament offers cash prizes to the top twenty finishers with the champion receiving a cool P100,000.

Backed by the First Asia Institute and the city government of Tanauan, the event is organized by the Active Chess Center of Asia and sanctioned by the National Chess Federation of the Philippines.

RACING TIPS
AT SANTA ANA BY MR. 999

Race 1—1. Bronte 2. Well Noted 3. Top of D Line 4. Mr. Lucas
Race 2—1. Royal Catch/Marque 2 Surprise Target 3. Cosanne/Vola
Race 3—1. Decidido 2. Hello Africa 3. Jaw Breaker 4. Boogie Shoes
Race 4—1. Magpakailanman 2. Speed Advantage/Speed Admiral 3. Sir Brendan Jean 4. Gold is Gold
Race 5—1. Ravishing Raffy 2. Golden Africa 3. Roppongi 4. Divine Right
Race 6—1. Ahoy My Boy 2. Scud Missile 3. Casanova 4. Nitty Gritty
Race 7—1. Red Star Rising 2. Sexiest 3. West Bound/Cover Girl 4. Lyonnais 5. American Woman
Race 8—1. Court General 2. King Size 3. Gigi's Gold 4. Ichiro
Race 9—1. Silver Cho Cho 2. Seniority 3. Soy Numero Uno 4. Dynasty 5. Hurricane Doding
Race 10—1. Manila Magic 2. Sir Guguy 3. Cat's Gold 4. Jay Nicole
Race 11—1. Rivaldo 2. Silver Eagle 3. Habagat 4. Ginja 5. I Miss You
Race 12—1. Real Black 2. Hakuna Matata 3. Juanito's Dream 4. Stradivarius
Race 13—1. Nagmamahal 2. Letshaveaparty 3. Playing Cool 4. Golden Treasure 5 Trouble Master 6. Silver Music

See'mall!

AYALA CINEMAS

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THX 1 AISHITE IMASU	1 MANO PO 3	1 SIGAW	5 PANAGHOY SA SUBA	THX 1 MANO PO 3 2:00, 4:20, 6:40, 9:00, 11:20	1 LASTIKMAN
2 PANAGHOY SA SUBA	2 ENTENG KABISOTE	2 AISHITE IMASU	6 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS	THX 2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10, 11:30	2 AISHITE IMASU
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS	3 PANAGHOY SA SUBA	THX 3 LASTIKMAN 12:50, 3:15, 5:40, 8:05, 10:30	7 ENTENG KABISOTE	3 LASTIKMAN 1:50, 4:15, 6:40, 9:05, 11:30	3 SIGAW
4 ENTENG KABISOTE	4 HAPPY TOGETHER	4 HAPPY TOGETHER		4 AISHITE IMASU 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10, 11:30	4 HAPPY TOGETHER
5 MANO PO 3		GB1 (Greenbelt 1): 1 PANAGHOY SA SUBA 11:30, 2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30; 2 HAPPY TOGETHER 12:50, 3:00, 5:10, 7:20, 9:30		5 SIGAW 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10, 11:30	5 MANO PO 3

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

December 26 12:30 PM Market! Market! cinema lobby; 2:30 PM Glorietta 4 cinema lobby; 3:30 PM Greenbelt 3 cinema lobby	LASTIKMAN Characters in parade
December 27 4:00 PM Glorietta 4 cinema lobby	SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
December 28 4:00 PM Glorietta 1 cinema lobby	ENTENG KABISOTE
December 30 12:00 NN Market! Market!	LASTIKMAN
December 30 2:00 PM Glorietta 4 cinema lobby	LASTIKMAN

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Sox re-sign ace catcher

BOSTON—World Series champion Boston welcomes back a familiar man behind the plate in free agent catcher Jason Varitek, who inked a four-year Major League Baseball deal worth $40 million, the club announced Friday.

The Red Sox will have three new pitchers imported from National League clubs as they try to defend their American League crown as well as their first World Series title since 1918, making 32-year-old Varitek a key man to retain.

The switch-hitter set career highs in batting average at .296 and on-base percentage at .390 while producing 18 home runs and batting in 73 runs last season. But his skills as a team leader and top defender are equally crucial.

Boston's 2005 rotation will feature left-hander David Wells and right-handers Matt Clement and Wade Miller, all free agents who signed earlier this month.

Varitek, pitchers Pedro Martinez and Derek Lowe, and shortstop Orlando Cabrera were the top free agents from Boston's first championship team in 86 years but it appears Varitek will be the only one returning next season.

The Red Sox lost Martinez, who signed a four-year deal worth $53 million with the New York Mets last week after spurning a three-year offer worth $40 million from Boston.

Cabrera signed a four-year deal worth $32 million with Anaheim and Lowe is not expected to be re-signed.

Varitek, obtained with Lowe from Seattle in 1997 for relief pitcher Heathcliff Slocumb, has hit .271 with 97 homers and driven in 418 over 832 games with Boston. In 2003, he set career highs with 25 homers and 85 runs batted in. *AFP*

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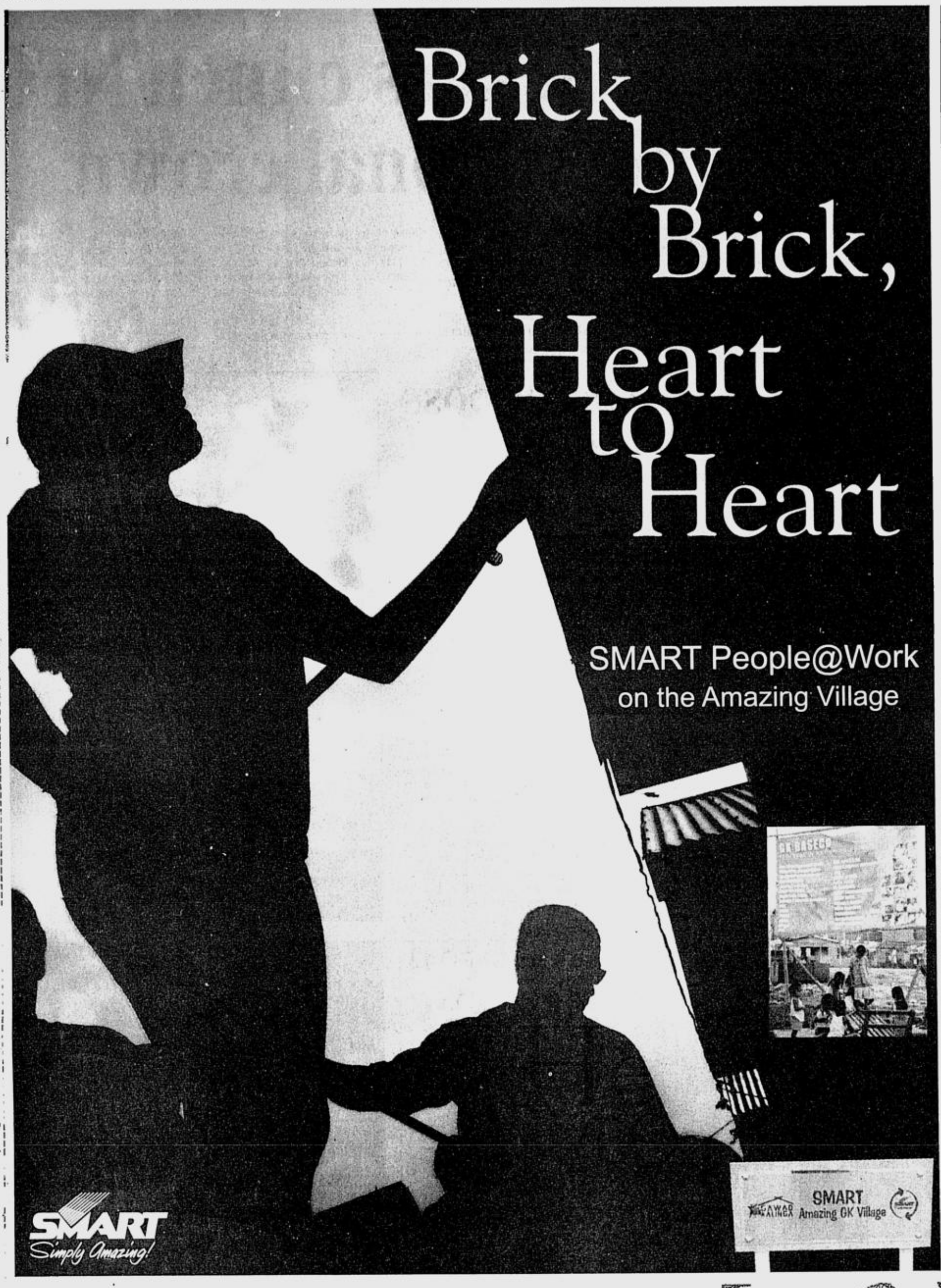
Hopman tourney: love-zero

BRISBANE, Australia —It was the love match all Australian tennis fans wanted to watch—Lleyton Hewitt playing fiancee Kim Clijsters at the Hopman Cup.

An ankle injury forced Clijsters out of that scheduled mixed doubles match in January and since then the tennis circuit's highest-profile couple has split. Clijsters has spent the year battling a left wrist injury that will likely rule her out of the Australian Open, the season's first Grand Slam, which starts Jan. 17, 2005, in Melbourne.

The Hopman Cup, which begins on New Year's Day with a qualifying match between the Netherlands and Zimbabwe for the final berth in the eight-nation event, kick-starts a two-week, nine-tournament swing through Australia and New Zealand.

There are also additional men's tournaments beginning Jan. 3, 2005, in Madras, India, and Doha, Qatar. At Doha, the biggest drawcard is Roger Federer of Switzerland, winner of this year's Australian Open, Wimbledon and US Open. *AP*



Christmas Comes Early to Baseco

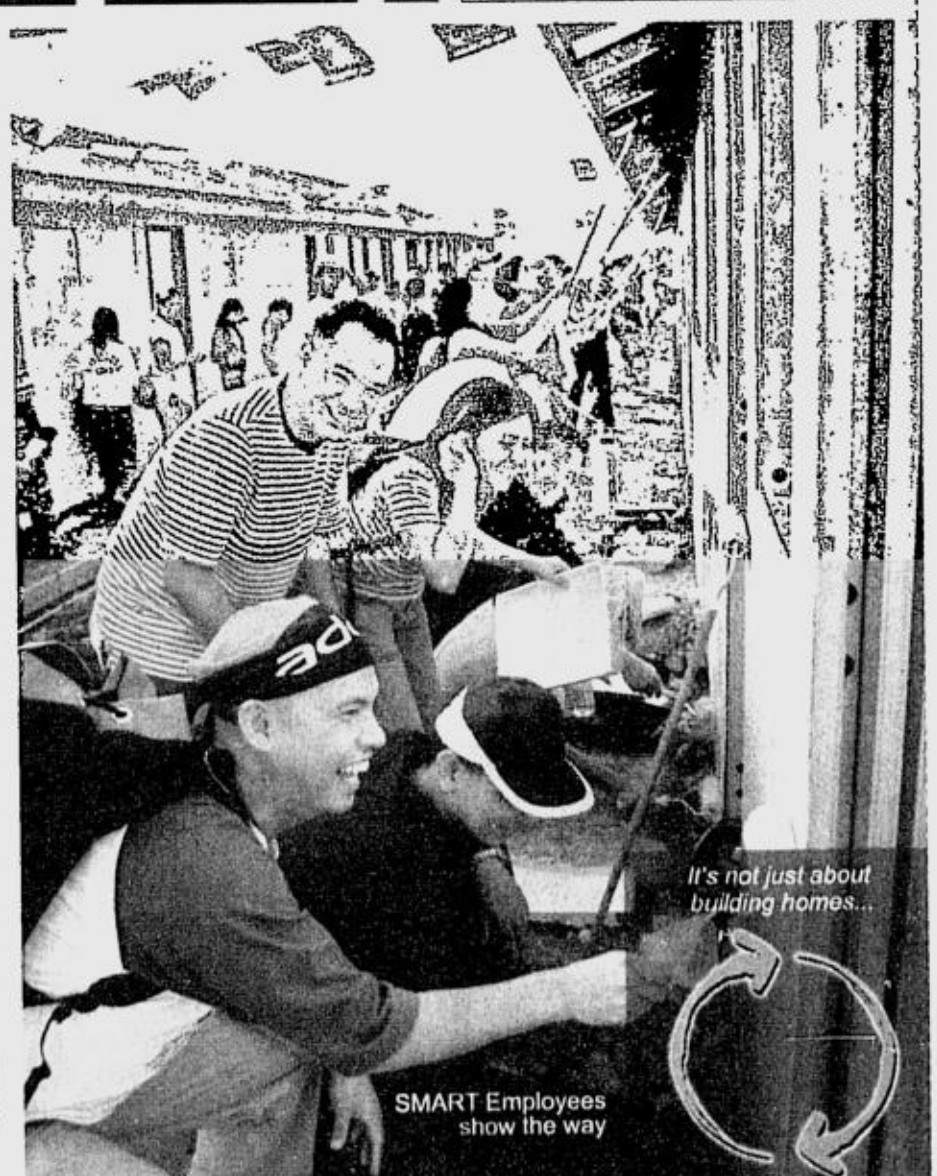
A good number of families got an early taste of Christmas last December 18, 2004. SMART gave Xmas Baskets full of foodstuffs to Baseco residents, sharing the Yuletide spirit with the less fortunate.

There was a festive mood in the air as the community was treated to singing and performances onstage, mostly by the humorous emcee. It was an unstructured and free-flowing celebration. Christmas is in the sharing and loving after all, and by the looks on faces of children, there was lots of love going around.

Dawn had clearly broken by the time the new building crew trooped to the SMART Amazing Village at the Baseco Compound in Tondo. For many in this group it would be their first taste of construction work and the enthusiasm glowed warm on each and every face. Today, SMART employees themselves were taking hammer and paintbrush in hand to do their part in realizing the SMART and Gawad Kalinga dream of completing shelters for a hundred displaced families.

Months ago during the groundbreaking, residents had literally risen from the ashes. Baseco had just suffered one of the worst fires in this community's history, and families saw their shanties, their very worlds go up in flames. Gawad Kalinga's vision of "GK 777" or 700,000 homes in 7,000 communities in 7 years had caught the attention of SMART Communications. The day the first stones were laid then for the SMART Amazing Village was the day PLDT and SMART Chairman Manny V. Pangilinan celebrated his birthday with residents at Baseco.

SMART Content Providers were also doing their part for the Amazing Village



This day was for SMART employees to make even more direct contributions to the realization of GK 777. The morning's toil was a more heartfelt and intimate connection to the vision of helping others help themselves. The sun shone bright but not hot as a gusty bay breeze blew away the dust and haze. Dawn had clearly broken, and a new day glowed with ever more promise.

Packers clinch NFC divisional crown

MINNEAPOLIS—Ryan Longwell's 29-yard field goal as time expired in the fourth quarter lifted Green Bay past the Minnesota Vikings, 34-31, clinching the third straight NFC North title for the Packers.

Green Bay also beat Minnesota in Week 10 by the same score thanks to Longwell's 33-yard field goal on the final play of regulation.

Brett Favre completed 30-of-43 passes for 365 yards with three touchdowns and one interception for the Packers (9-6).

Favre moved ahead of Warren Moon for third place on the all-time list for career passing yards.

Donald Driver caught 11 passes for a career-high 162 yards and a touchdown for Green Bay. Javon Walker and Bubba Franks also had TD receptions for the Packers, who have won eight of their last 10 contests.

Minnesota quarterback Daunte Culpepper finished 16-of-23 for 285 yards and three touchdowns. *Reuters*

Soccer boss is football's 'Scrooge'

LONDON—Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho takes his Premiership leaders into the busy holiday schedule insisting the Christmas football period "means nothing to him."

Mourinho, whose side faces Aston Villa at Stamford Bridge on Sunday, is adamant that he will only be in a party mood when the season comes to an end in May.

"The big challenge is to be champions at the end of the season. The Christmas football period means nothing," said the mercurial Portuguese coach.

"We know we have four difficult matches and it is normal you drop points. So the short-term challenge is to get the maximum points possible from these four matches and control the five-point advantage we have in relation to the second position."

Mourinho's Christmas message to the Blues fans, who are relishing the prospect of their first top flight title since 1955, is that family is more important than the game they flock to watch.

"My Christmas message to the fans is that family is much more important than football. *AFP*

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
SundaySPORTS

A very merry Christmas

Cancer-stricken player getting better, hopes for best

By Jasmine W. Payo

LINO "Jon-jon" Tabique Jr. wasn't sure if he would live to see Christmas.

At 21, the former University of the Philippines point guard has been carrying the fear of dying young.

"*Umabot ako ng* Christmas (I made it to Christmas)," he said, managing a chuckle.

Last January, Tabique was diagnosed with stage 3 non-Hodgkins lymphoma, a form of cancer affecting the lymphatic system.

The disease had spread extensively, attacking tissues and organs that helped his body fight infections and other diseases. The critical condition cut short his hoop dreams and Tabique quickly started with chemotherapy to combat the illness.

"I was depressed for two months [after the diagnosis]," Tabique said. "I was often angry. I can't eat and I was always dizzy and often felt like throwing up after chemo."

Tabique also lost all his hair, which he loved wearing long. "After my first chemo, I just ran my fingers through my hair, *at sumasama na sila* ," he said. "I had my head shaved right away because I'll feel more depressed if I see my hair slowly fall out."

But amidst bouts of depression, the ex-varsity player has shown great resolve. It has been a long and difficult treatment, but just last November, doctors said Tabique seems to be on his way to recovery.

"Long hair *na ulit ako ngayon. Nakakapag-gel na ako*," Tabique shared with a hearty laugh. "There's no more chemo, no more radiation (therapy). I'm just taking medicines and vitamins."

But Tabique remains cautious, well aware that the condition of cancer patients can change. "I'm still under observation," he noted. "I also have to go back to the doctor on January."

The 5-foot-7 playmaker hopes to get back on the hardcourt. "I haven't been playing basketball," said Tabique. "*Gusto ko sana maglaro* but my doctor said I need to rest. "

Basketball always holds a special place in Tabique's heart. "As long as I can remember, I've been playing basketball."

Tabique started out scrimmaging in Sampaloc, Manila. He then became a member of the vaunted San Beda junior high school basketball team.

His first NCAA junior championship title came in 1999 and among his teammates were LA Tenorio and Magnum Membrere of the Ateneo Blue Eagles and Arjun Cordero of the San Beda Lions.

Although his basketball career has taken a backseat, Tabique is happier now that he's aptly celebrating the gift of life on Christmas. He's spending the holidays with his family including his 10-month-old daughter, Andrei, and his father, Lino, a seaman who has decided to take care of his son full time.

His mother, Susan, however, is still in the United States working as a caregiver. "*Sayang*, she won't be here," he said.

"*Pero masaya na rin ako ngayon*," added Tabique. "I'm just hoping for good health for next year. *Sana tuluy-tuloy na*."

ONCE staring at the prospect of 'dying young,' Jon-jon Tabique looks forward to more tomorrows after celebrating the gift of life this Christmas. PDI PHOTO

Kobe-Shaq war relives rivalries of old—and more

EL SEGUNDO—For the game unlike any other in Lakers history, Kobe Bryant tried to find comparison this week, from the days before he first played alongside Shaquille O'Neal as an 18-year-old rookie.

"I've watched many great matchups growing up with Magic and Bird, Magic and Michael," Bryant said. "It feels kind of weird now that us as a team are going up against the Miami Heat and we're involved in that same type of matchup that we used to watch growing up as kids."

If only the Christmas Day showdown at Staples Center between Bryant and O'Neal's Miami Heat was that simple. If only the storyline consisted of nothing more than two former teammates through eight seasons and three championships touching fists before tipoff for the first time since the breakup.

The countless feuds and franchise-defining trade in July took care of that. All that remains now is hype, never-ending and inescapable, building until the two take the court at noon in front of a capacity crowd and national television audience.

They shadowed each other all season, then missed crossing paths by a half-hour Friday afternoon at the Lakers' practice facility. Bryant walked out to his car before O'Neal rolled up in a tricked-out van, a receiving line forming at the passenger window.

Whatever feelings existed between the two during their time with the Lakers have vanished, even after Bryant's apology to O'Neal on television last week for bringing up his name to Eagle County, Colorado, detectives investigating his sexual-assault case.

O'Neal was asked if there was anything he wanted to say to Bryant and responded, "No." He was asked if he saw Bryant's apology and answered, "I don't watch TV. TV corrupts the mind."

For his part, Bryant was asked if he would have any added emotions and was more expansive than O'Neal, saying, "No, none, zero."

"It's just a game," Bryant said. "It's not an individual matchup. He's a center, I'm a guard. It's not like we're going to be mano-a-mano. It's not like a Shaq-Duncan matchup or a Shaq-Hakeem (Olajuwon) matchup or even a (Patrick) Ewing or whatever it is."

This will be just the first in a series of Bryant/O'Neal showdowns this season and beyond. The two almost certainly will be starters on opposite sides in February's All-Star Game in Denver and will meet again in Miami on March 17, 2005, 39 games from now.

It could be the beginning of the NBA's next great rivalry, or at least the highest-rated game broadcast on Christmas.

"It depends on what type of games we have," Bryant said. "If we have these great games, these last-second games, stuff like that, I think people will look forward to it." *New York Times News Service*

O'Neal plays Santa, scores with LA fans

O'NEAL: Shaq-A-Claus

LOS ANGELES—Shaquille O'Neal came to town to play Santa Claus to 250 kids, and it didn't matter that the grinning basketball star was no longer a member of the home team.

After eight years as a star with the Los Angeles Lakers, O'Neal will play Saturday against the Lakers as a member of the Miami Heat.

But Friday, he was "Shaq-A-Claus" as he pulled up to the Challengers Boys & Girls Club in South Los Angeles in a truck filled with bicycles, Sony Playstations, karaoke machines, sneakers and other gifts.

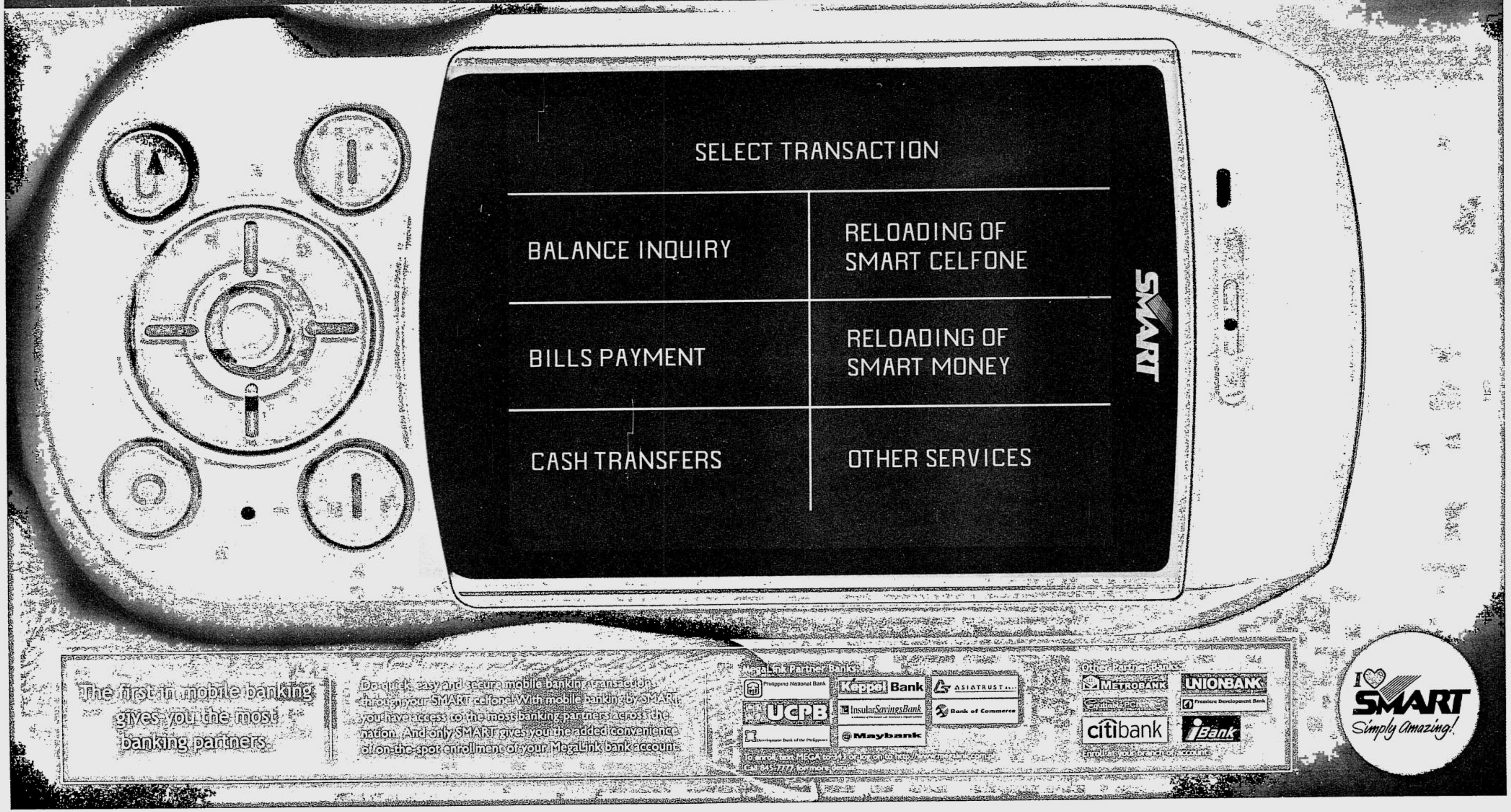
"I'm glad to be back here. I miss everybody," O'Neal told reporters. "These kids are the future."

For several hours, O'Neal and teammate Damon Jones handed out gifts to the crowd. O'Neal bought many of the gifts himself during a Friday morning visit to a Toys-R-Us store.

"He gives back a lot to us," said 16-year-old Dwayne Gibbons, who received a video game console from O'Neal. "He went back to Miami, but he doesn't forget about us. That's why I love him."

It didn't matter to the crowd that O'Neal would take the court at the Staples Center wearing another uniform. O'Neal downplayed talk of rivalry with former teammate Kobe Bryant—although earlier this week he spoke of himself as a "brick wall" against Bryant's "Corvette."

"Hopefully I'll get a great reception (from the crowd)," O'Neal said. "But who knows what's going to happen." *AP*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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2004

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

ENTERTAINMENT

A2-1

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VISITS by Fernando Poe Jr. to the FPJ Studios were rare, but in the last month, he came almost every day, says a guard. JOAN BONDOC

Missing 'Manager'

By Nini Valera

THE FPJ Studios on Del Monte Avenue in Quezon City is still bustling with life.

Only a small portrait of Fernando Poe Jr. and a large picture of Jesus Christ surrounded by flowers and food offerings are the visible signs of the actor's death. But it's business as usual for the living, like guard Ronnie Manabat, who keeps track of the

MISSING/ A2-2

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Missing 'Manager'

From page A2-1

visitors that come and go at the compound.

"Hindi kayo nagpapaalam sa akin [You haven't told me you're going]," Manabat told a group of delivery boys from San Miguel Corp., who were about to leave the studios with a truckload of softdrinks.

"You should register with me first," he added in Filipino.

Visits from 'Da King'

The FPJ compound has become a veritable storage area for the refreshments sent by FPJ's friends and supporters for the wake. Hundreds of boxes of softdrinks in cans, energy drinks, juices and instant noodles are stored side by side with the sacks of relief goods that FPJ was supposed to have helped pack for the typhoon victims in Quezon province just before he suffered what doctors called a "severe brain attack."

Manabat, 37, has been with FPJ for eight years. It's only been eight days since the actor died and Manabat already misses the man, whom he calls "Manager."

"We call him Manager from the movie 'Manedyer si Kumander,' Manabat explained.

"He was here practically everyday last month," the guard said. "He rarely came here. At most, he would visit here only two or three times a month.

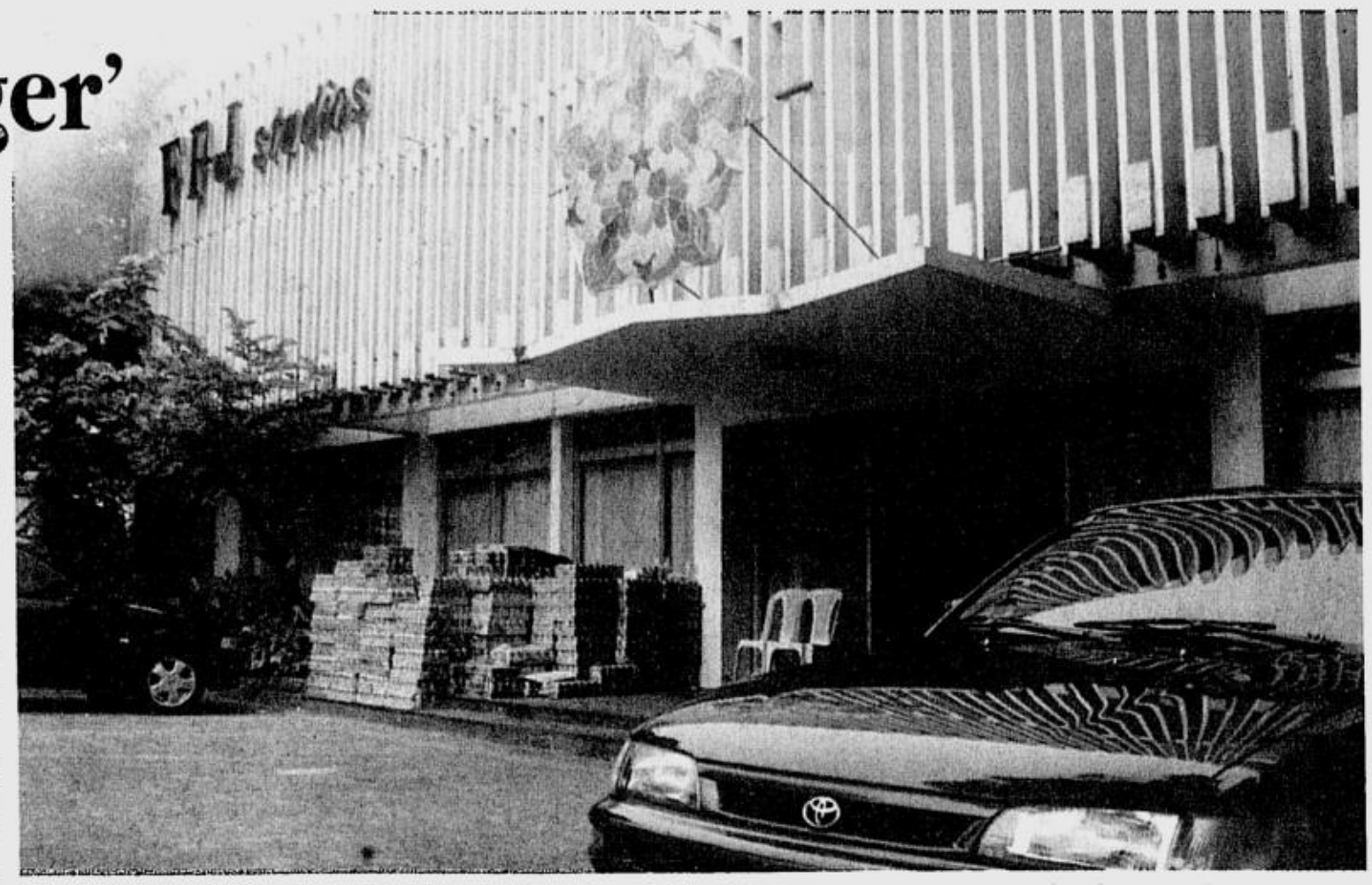
"But last month, until the day he died, he came here to help pack the relief goods every day. We were all surprised."

A very kind man

The guard said that the last time he spoke to FPJ was at 6 p.m. of Dec. 12, the night the actor was rushed to the hospital after complaining of a headache.

"He told me to make sure the air conditioners were turned on for the party," Manabat said. "Instead of asking somebody else to do it, I turned on the air conditioners myself. That was the last time I spoke to the Manager."

Like millions of other Filipinos, Manabat is saddened by FPJ's death.



EMPTY, LONELY is the FPJ Studios without "Da King."

"He was a very kind man," Manabat said. "He always thought of everybody. If he and other people were here and if they were eating, he was the first to remember to send food to the guards.

"He would buy ten kilos of beef, ten kilos of pork, which would be cooked in a stove at the back of the studios. We are never hungry when he's around."

Manabat has heard tales of the actor's generosity, but he did not dare ask him for anything.

"I was embarrassed to ask him for help," he admitted. "It is enough that he was a good boss and a kind man."

Hospital bills

Last Monday, Manabat showed INQUIRER Entertainment framed posters of FPJ's movies, all hanging on the wall of a large empty room in the studios.

The movie "Manager si Kumander," directed by the late Pablo Santiago, starred FPJ and wife Susan Roces.

Barely a week after Buddy Santos, a member of the production crew of FPJ, was discharged from the Philippine Heart Center, he was back at work at the FPJ Studios.

"If not for him (FPJ), I would not have been able to get out of the hospital," Santos told INQUIRER Entertainment in Filipino.

"He paid for my bills. Helping out during his wake is the only way I know to repay him."

Santos, 48, said he first met FPJ 40 years ago as a movie fan.

"I would come here with [late actor] Van de Leon because I wanted to meet other actors," he recalled. "Later on, FPJ took me in to be a part of his crew. I am so happy to have known him."

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'Kundiman,' Christmas songs in Rizal Day breakfast concert

THE MABUHAY at Kalayaan Singers, led by Geronimo C. Sta. Maria, will be featured in a Rizal Day breakfast concert at the Plaza de Armas in Fort Santiago, Intramuros, Manila at 8 a.m. on Dec. 30.

The concert is presented by the Rizal Day 2004 National Organizing Committee as one of the activities in the celebration of the 108th anniversary of the martyrdom of Dr. Jose Rizal.

The Rizal Day breakfast starts after the 7 a.m. flag-raising and wreath-laying ceremonies at the Rizal National Monument.

The concert, with the theme "Mga Awiting Kundiman Alay sa Inyong Kadakilaan," includes *kundiman* and Christmas songs. Sta. Maria will recite Rizal's "Mi Ultimo Adios" before the concert.

For more information, call 524-9952.

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"PANAGHOY sa Suba," with Juliana Palermo and star/director/producer Cesar Montano

'Fearful' forecast

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

WHO WILL romp off with the 2004 Metro Manila Film Festival trophies? Our "fearful forecast," for whatever it's worth:

Best Picture: "Panaghoy sa Suba." Director: **Cesar Montano**. Actor: A toss-up between Montano in "Panaghoy" and **Eric Quizon** in "So Happy Together."

Actress: **Vilma Santos** in "Mano Po 3." Supporting actor: **Dennis Trillo** in "Aishite Imasu." Supporting actress: **Rebecca Lusterio** in "Panaghoy."

We've arrived at these choices after having viewed the film fest entries. Will we be proven right? Only the film fest jurors know for sure, and they aren't announcing their decisions until Dec. 29.

This early, however, it looks like the film fest's big surprise is "Panaghoy." Cesar Montano's movie is a trailblazer because it's the first Filipino movie produced in many years with its dialogue in Cebuano.

If enough people go out of their way to see it, the film could all by itself revive the long-dormant Visayan film industry.

That's a consummation devoutly to be wished, because many millions of Filipinos speak or at least understand Cebuano, so their lifestyle and viewpoint deserve to be represented on the movie screen.

"Panaghoy" is also significant because it's a surprisingly good movie. Director-producer-lead actor Montano really poured his heart into this production, and his passion and talent make it an exceptional production.

Yes, it has its weak points, but its many virtues effectively mitigate them, and leave us admiring this little gem of a film.

We trust that, even if you don't speak Cebuano (it has English subtitles), you will make it a point to see "Panaghoy sa Suba," not only to encourage Montano, but to prompt other filmmakers to also make their dream films.

'Probe' special

ON TUESDAY, Dec. 28 at 10 p.m., "The Probe Team Documentaries" on ABC 5 airs a special episode in which artist-reporter **Robert Alejandro** documents his first six grueling months in Vancouver, Canada.

He has brought home a unique personal home video of his stay in Canada, from plunging to the depths of loneliness after he arrived, to job-hunting, working as a janitor, then as a graphic artist, etc.

As Robert recorded his own daunting experiences, he found himself going through the daunting, emotional roller-coaster ride that many immigrants and OFWs must go through in starting a new life in a strange country.

Thus, he found himself understanding the feelings of countless Filipinos who dare to leave and try their luck elsewhere. It is hoped that viewers will also get to better understand the phenomenon of the new Filipino "diaspora," which has been continuously increasing in number and importance in the past two decades.

'Constantine'

KEANU Reeves' big starrer for the first half of 2005 is "Constantine," an action-thriller with a big difference.

The unusual element is Reeves' characterization, which goes beyond realism. Based on the DC/Vertigo comic book "Hellblazer," the film tells the story of an irreverent "supernatural" detective, John Constantine (Reeves), who has literally been to hell and back.

He teams up with a skeptical policewoman, Angela Dodson (**Rachel Weisz**) to solve the mysterious suicide of her twin sister (also played by Weisz).

Unexpectedly, their investigation takes them through the world of demons and angels that exists just beneath the city of Los Angeles.

Caught in a startling series of otherworldly events, the two lead characters become inextricably involved, and struggle to find their own peace—at whatever cost.

"Constantine" is directed by **Francis Lawrence**, who had megged award-winning videos for famous musicians like Aerosmith, Incubus, **Justin Timberlake, Jennifer Lopez** and **Will Smith**.

His first feature film is written by **Kevin Brodbin, Mark Bomback** and **Frank Capello**.

"WHITE BOOK of Love" replaces another Chinovela, the big hit "Snow Angel"

'White Book of Love' opens on GMA Network

A STORY or friendship, love and destiny unfolds in GMA's new Chinovela, "White Book of Love," which started on Dec. 20.

Adapted from the well-known Japanese comics, "Asunaro Hakusho," or "Love White Book" by Saimon Fumi, this drama became an instant hit throughout Asia. Starring Hong Kong heartthrob Shawn Yu and Taiwan's hottest idols Rainie Yang, Christine Fan, Eddie Peng and Raymond Li, it will not be long before "White Book of Love" wins the hearts of Filipino viewers as well.

The story revolves around two friends, Kenneth (Yu) and Sharmaine (Yang), who are in love with each other. When Sharmaine enters a review center, she meets members of the Tomorrow Club, which includes Kenneth, Bojo (Peng), Trina (Fan) and Nathan (Li), and instantly becomes their friend.

However, she also catches the attention of Kenneth and Bojo, who both end up holding back their feelings to give way to each other. Thus begins a complex love triangle, which brings unfortunate consequences for the people around them, especially their closest friends.

All in all, the plot spans over eight years, from the time they all meet till they graduate from the university and live as young adults.

Like chapters in a book, there are both happy and rough times. But the main thrust is, who ends up with Sharmaine?

"White Book of Love" airs Mondays through Fridays after "Joyride," replacing another Chinovela, the hugely successful "Snow Angel."

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Blood came too late for 'Da King'

By Nini Valera

DOCTORS were supposed to operate on Fernando Poe Jr. to remove the blood clot in his brain a few minutes before the actor died last Dec. 14, according to Dr. Manuel Calayan.

Calayan, a surgeon who specializes in fat reduction procedures, told INQUIRER Entertainment last week that actors Phillip Salvador and Gina Alajar, who had the same Type O blood as FPJ, were getting ready to donate their blood a few minutes before the actor died at one minute past midnight.

Third-floor drama

The doctor, who said he is a family friend of the Poes, related the drama that unfolded before his eyes on the third floor of St. Luke's Medical Center where the Intensive Care Unit was located.

"A crowd had gathered in the corridor as Gina Alajar and I found our way to the ICU," recounted Calayan in Filipino. "Media people were barred, and they were only accepting relatives and friends of FPJ."

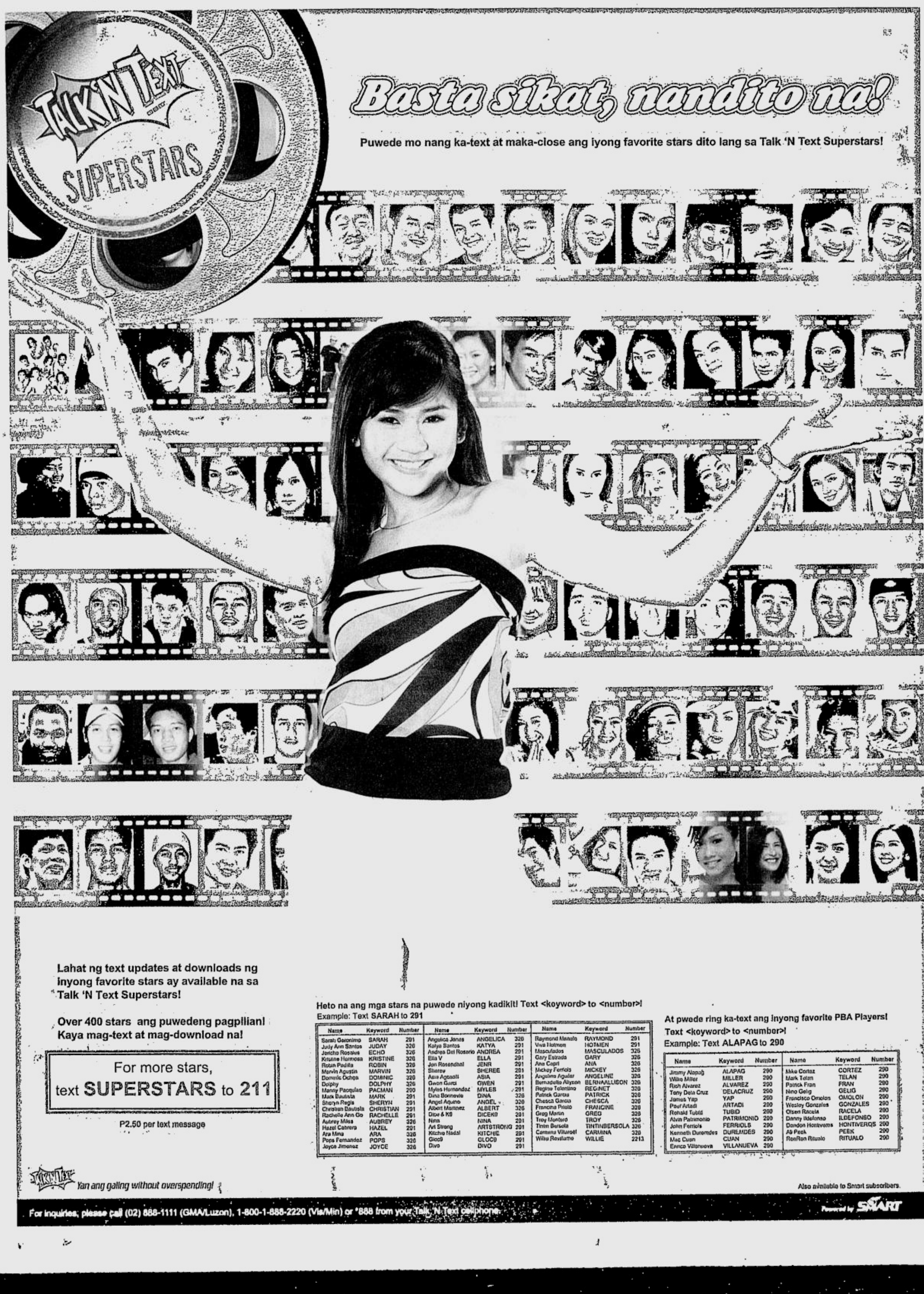
FPJ's doctor, Abdias Aquino, was Calayan's professor, Calayan said.

"He was looking for people who could donate Type O blood to FPJ for the operation," Calayan said. "Gina happens to be Type O. But they did not want to get her blood because she had just had her period.

"Another blood donor was Phillip Salvador.

BLOOD/ A3-2

FPJ's actor-friends Philip Salvador and Gina Alajar offered, but . . .



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New Living Asia Channel now airing 24 hours

HONG KONG-BASED broadcast service provider and content distributor Pacific Century Matrix (HK) Limited, PCM, has begun airing a new 24-hour television channel on its AsiaSat 3S platform, starting Dec. 1.

Living Asia Channel, a brand of Philippines-based content producer CCI Asia Group, offers visually engaging and highly insightful Asian travel and lifestyle narratives. On PCM's AsiaSat 3S high-power broadcast service, the channel is now available to viewers across Asia-Pacific and the Middle East.

The distribution of Living Asia Channel on AsiaSat 3S brings the channel to the best cable neighborhood and the largest home viewer base in Asia. PCM, in cooperation with CCI Asia Group, is the exclusive distributor to cable and DTH operators across the region.

Living Asia Channel's combination of English-language programming and a pan-Asian profile has proven to be attractive to Asia-Pacific cable operators seeking to diversify their content offerings. Pre-launch carriage agreements have been finalized with operators in Thailand and Taiwan.

In the Philippines, nearly half a million paying subscribers are already watching Living Asia Channel through domestic cable and DTH operators. And in North America, over one million paying subscribers have access to Living Asia Channel through the TFC Direct! and GlobeCast WorldTV DTH services.

CCI ASIA Group vice chair John Carl L. Magno (left) and Pacific Century Matrix (HK) Limited CEO Guenter Kring seal the contract at the Island Shangri-La Hotel in Hong Kong.

Living Asia Channel's programs cater to a target audience age group of 25 to 45. The channel showcases the best of Asian destinations, finds, culture, cuisine, fashion, people, business, issues and investment opportunities in Asia.

The distribution of Living Asia Channel in South Asia and North America is a joint venture of the CCI Asia Group, Mabuhay Satellite Corp. and GlobeCast Asia. In the Philippines, it is made available through the facilities of Dream Broadcasting System.

CCI Asia Group is a 7-year-old content producer specializing in travel and advocacy documentaries. Other TV brands that it has created are Isla TV (public service broadcasting), Juice TV (urban youth lifestyle programs) and Lakbay TV (the Philippines' first and only dedicated travel channel on cable TV).

Pacific Century Matrix (HK) Limited, a company privately owned by Richard Li Tzar-kai's Pacific Century Group, is a leading Asia Pacific provider of premium broadcast contribution and distribution services, as well as content management services. PCM's premium C-band MCPC broadcast distribution platforms are on Asia Pacific's most prominent satellites.

For more information, contact Sean Langston, Pacific Century Matrix (HK) Limited at +852-2965-1238, sean@pc-matrix.com, or www.livingasiachannel.net.

GINA Alajar, one of the Type-O blood donors

Blood came too late for 'Da King'

From page A3-1

But he looked pale when he offered his blood. We told him to rest for 30 minutes first before blood would be drawn from him. But FPJ died before that."

Calayan said he was able to enter the ICU while FPJ was still alive because he was a doctor.

"I just peeked," he said. "Susan [Roces, FPJ's wife] was beside him. She was so calm."

Then Calayan went down to give GMA-7's Arnold Clavio an update on FPJ's condition, the surgeon said.

It's true, he's dead

While he was on standby, Clavio received a call from GMA-7 reporter Lhar Santiago, who said FPJ had died.

"So I went up again to confirm the news," Calayan said. "I saw everybody on the third floor crying. It's true, FPJ is dead, I told myself."

The last time Calayan saw FPJ alive was during the presidential election last May, according to the doctor.

"My wife and I actively campaigned for him," said Calayan. "FPJ gave me his campaign pins, glasses and caps to give to my patients. He told me, 'bahala ka na diyan, Doc [You take care of these].' That was the last time I spoke to him."

Calayan spoke to Susan last last week, during FPJ's wake at the Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon City.

"She was still so calm," he said. "But she was telling us that she had planned to surprise him by refurbishing a house she had bought recently. They were supposed to celebrate their Christmas family reunion there."

Advice from 'Da King'

Former bold actor Mark Joseph told INQUIRER Entertainment that he was among the other actors who had accompanied FPJ's body on its way from Arlington Memorial Homes in Pasig to Sto. Domingo Church in Quezon City.

"I was with Phillip Salvador, Rudy Fernandez and other actors when we brought FPJ to the church," said Joseph.

He said FPJ had left him a very valuable piece of advice.

"If it were not for him, I would have stayed a bold actor and not shifted to action films, which I did," Joseph said in Filipino.

"He once advised me to try action roles," the former "pene king" related. "He did not approve of bold movies. He said bold movies were no good."

Saying goodbye

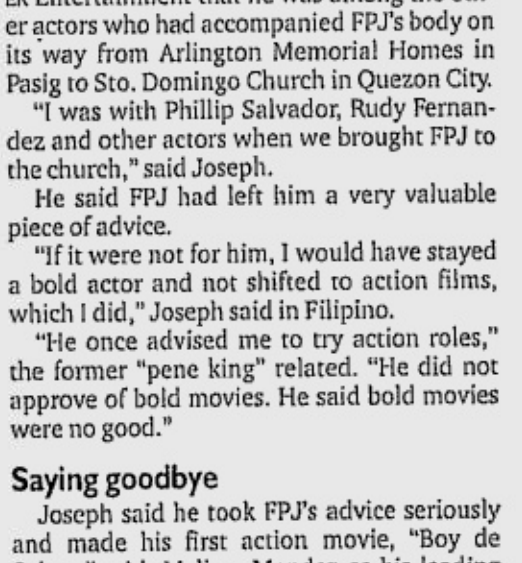
Joseph said he took FPJ's advice seriously and made his first action movie, "Boy de Sabog," with Melissa Mendez as his leading lady.

He was remembering his conversation with FPJ about bold movies when he walked down the aisle of Sto. Domingo Church to take his turn to view the body of the king of Philippine movies, Joseph said.

"My knees almost buckled," he admitted. "I couldn't believe that he's dead. He touched my life the way he touched millions of people. He is really 'Da King.'"

Joseph also related that while he was seated on a pew beside the other action stars, he felt clammy and cold. But when he looked at Phillip, the actor was perspiring.

"Then I felt a heavy pressure around my shoulders," Joseph said. "It felt like an arm, a gesture FPJ had always done when he talked to me. It must have been him saying goodbye to me."



PHILLIP Salvador grew pale and had to be told to rest first.

JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

A thought from a non-reader.

A mind on the blink can be a real turn-off. If you need a bit of stimulation, try reading for a change. Just a thought.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

HIGH-SPIRITED gang (from left) Joseph Bitagcol, Maja Salvador, Mico Aytona, Michelle Madrigal, Rayver Cruz, Jiro Manio, John Wayne Sace and Serena Dalrymple .

High 'Spirits' on the set

SHOW STOPPER

By Amy Mosura
Contributor

EXPECT anything on a TV set, especially where the average age of the cast members is 15.5 years old.

Possibly the last thing you'd expect to see is one of the cast members actually doing the job of a production staffer, as on the Calamba, Laguna, set of the new ABS-CBN teleserye, "Spirits." Clipboard and script in hand and headset stuck to his ears, Mico Aytona, 16, who plays resident clown Thor on "Spirits," today was doing another job as the series' assistant director.

"Quiet, we're about to roll tape!" Mico yelled before admitting to this writer in his normal voice, "I've always wanted to be a director."

And so it is on the set of "Spirits," the first regular TV project of acclaimed filmmaker Chito Roño. Best known for intelligent adult film dramas like "Bata, Bata, Paano Ka Ginawa?," "Dekada '70" and his debut, "Private Show," Roño has always had a soft spot for family entertainment, as can be seen in his "Yamashita: The Tiger's Treasure" and the "Spirit Warriors" movies. "Spirits" is an expanded prequel of "Spirit Warriors."

Like one family

The Christmas season was on everyone's mind, as the cast members reflected on the year just past, on the set of what many of them consider their biggest career breaks.

"I suppose all we want for Christmas is to entertain as many people as we can on this show, and that it lasts longer than anyone expects," said Rayver Cruz, 15, who plays Red. A former reporter for the children's magazine show "5 and Up," Rayver noted that the family spirit on the set made it a pleasure to go to work, even now, only a few days before Christmas.

SMILING Serena

"It's like a family here," he said. "We get a lot of chances to prove ourselves, and when we take risks, we're comfortable because we're on a set where everyone is supportive, and *Direk* Chito and the rest of the staff are responsible for making that feeling happen."

The respect for Roño was echoed by Maja Salvador, 16, who, as Gabby, is in her second consecutive ABS-CBN teleserye role after the recently concluded "It Might Be You."

"At first, we were all tense, even the ones *Direk* Chito had worked with before," said Maja. "But we've been working together for more than two months now, and we've all learned how he communicates what he wants.

"*Direk* Chito's generous with his time," she added, "so we understand what we're supposed to be doing at all times. That's hard to do in a special effects-heavy show like this, which also has complicated editing and stories that demand a lot from actors like us. Also, it helps that all of us are friendly."

Listen to what *Direk* says

For Mico, it's a chance to spread his wings in ways that being a member of Animé—a dance group of teen actors that also includes Rayver and John Wayne Sace—rarely affords him.

"Like all directors, what *Direk* Chito wants is simple—for us to listen to what he says and do what he says, for the good of the scene."

"Which is why you're doing your little sideline-directing thing now," Rayver said.

"Actually, all of us want to take roles behind the scenes," said Jiro Manio, 12, the award-winning child actor who is playing his first teen role as Nato in "Spirits."

"That's true," said Rayver. "I want to be a cameraman."

"I was in the OB van a while ago," said Jiro. "I was giving Mico directions but he wasn't listening."

"Jiro, those weren't directions," Mico retorted.

The acting thing

"We go inside the OB van sometimes and they let us observe the things they do while we tape, which is nice," added Star Circle Quest graduate Michelle Madrigal, 16, who plays Maya.

"I want to be an audioman and put the microphones on everybody," John Wayne Sace, 15, said in a mock leer. "That or utility."

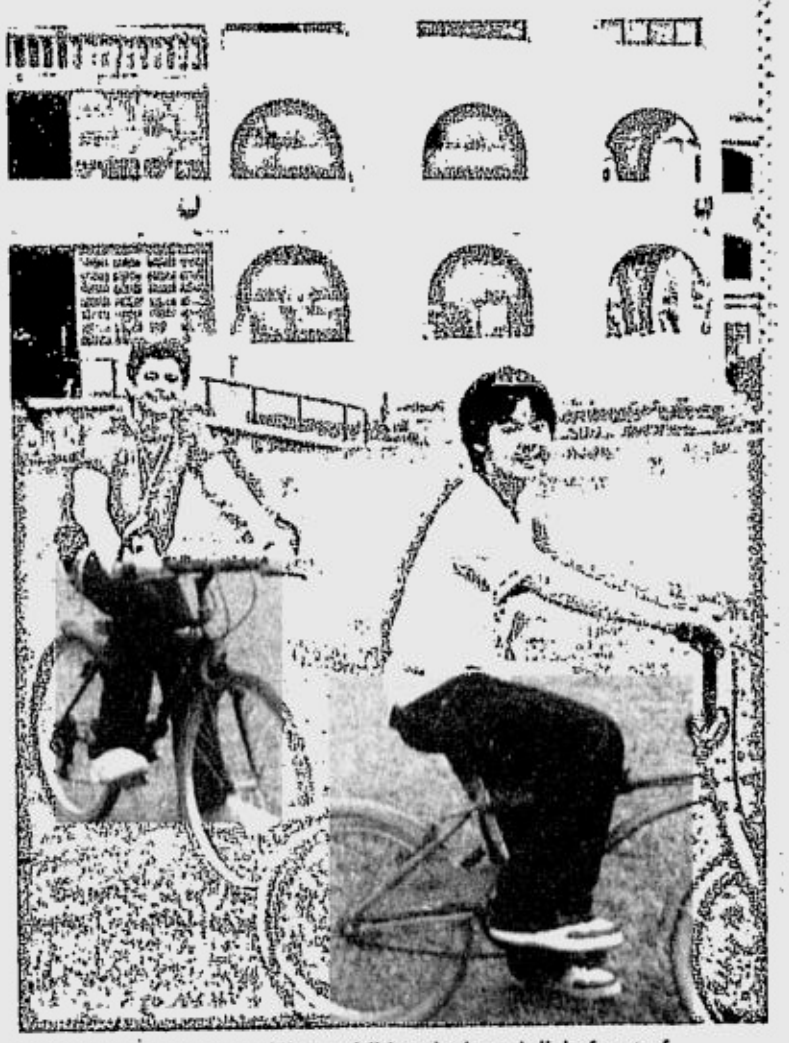
"But of course, we all hope the acting thing pans out," said Joseph Bitagcol, 20, who plays Jesse the firestarter. "Thank God the ratings are getting higher. And we're hearing a lot of encouragement from people who have become fans of the show during the three weeks we've been on air. I hope it catches on some more, though, because it's a really good show. In my humble opinion, of course."

As far as Christmas wishes were concerned, the young cast was united, and surprisingly mature, in their hopes for themselves.

Said Jiro, "I wish everything would stay the same. That next year, we'd all still be friends and still be working together. Everything else we want to keep simple, because that's the best way to deal with everything in show biz. Just keep things simple."

DAY JOB. Mico Aytona ("Thor") plays at being assistant director.

DIRECTED BY second unit director Cathy Garcia-Molina, Mico listens.



PLAY TIME. Rayver and Jiro go biking during a lull, in front of Calamba's Colegio de San Juan de Letran, which "plays" the Holy Spirit High School in the show.

THREE'S NOT A CROWD. Mico, Maja and Joseph pause, and pose, on their way to the set.

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Sunday BIZ

Business Features Editor
Margie Quimpo-Espino

Swiss uses his ear, finds RP a haven of talents for venture

BEHRINGER equipment bear the stamp of Filipino ingenuity.

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

SWISS national Uli Behringer grew up in a house where cutting edge technology and music came together like his favorite Rubinstein opus.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that when the founder of the world's 19th biggest pro-audio equipment manufacturer stumbled upon that unlikely combination in the Philippines, the 43-year-old Behringer decided to stay and set up a business.

It was the music first that lured the jazz loving Behringer to visit the country in 2001, after living for eight long, hard years in Hong Kong that left him burned out and semi-retired.

Behringer described those years as the most exhausting period in his life, and his sole source of fun was his Sunday jam sessions with Filipino friends at either the Mandarin Captain's Bar or Hyatt's Champagne Bar.

He always went home from those sessions exhilarated and with a growing admiration for the talents of the Filipinos.

Behringer, a classically trained pianist with a degree in sound engineering, then spent the next two years visiting the Philippines to continue jamming with more Filipino brothers in music.

But it was not until this year, when he met a friend who was in the electronics business, that he realized that music was not the sole talent of the Filipinos. They were as good in engineering.

With that realization came the idea to tap that depth of engineering talent to accelerate the growth of the pro-audio company that bears his name.

"I came here not knowing about the talent. I just started with just four to five employees to do simple jobs like graphic design," Behringer says.

"But over the next nine months, we grew the company here so much that we replaced the engineers in Germany. Now, our 70 Filipino engineers design many of the products that we sell in over 120 countries," he adds.

ULI BEHRINGER wants to put professional audio equipment within reach of musicians. JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

The first product was an electric guitar and accompanying amplifier that is sold in the market for just about P6,000, and Filipino engineers are now busy putting the final touches to an affordable digital piano and digital drums.

"As a student, it was always my dream to make music available to everybody, to make equipment available so that musicians can pursue their passions. And in this business, it is all about passion," Behringer says.

It was this passion that led Behringer to set up his company in 1989 in Germany, where he took up classical piano and sound engineering.

He, however, traces its beginnings to 1986 in his living room, where he tried to build his own professional audio recording equipment since the ones available in the market were so expensive.

Building equipment from scratch is not new to the music engineer as many days of his childhood were spent helping his father build the world's first electro-magnetically controlled pipe organ.

Behringer spent countless hours of his college years listening and improving on his digital reverb until he was satisfied with the results.

When his friends got to sample his digital reverb, they asked him to sell him a similar piece of equipment. He, thus, ended up selling off his first production run of 20.

Two years later and armed with a college degree, he decided to make the manufacturing of professional audio equipment "with twice the features at half the price" his life's calling.

Behringer credits the father of his former girlfriend, who was a top executive of a food company, for helping him lay the right foundation for his company.

"He was my mentor and he treated me like a son. I remember he took me for a walk in the forest and shared with me the basics of the business. He told me to watch overhead costs, grow organically and go easy on credit," Behringer says.

He may not have ended up marrying his mentor's daughter, but he kept those principles taught in one of Germany's forest close to his heart.

Behringer adds that it was this mentor who encouraged him to put his name to his company.

"He asked me, do you believe in your company? When I said yes, of course, he said then I should put my name on it. Look at the biggest companies, he said, they all bear the founder's names," he says.

That name is now known in the music circles as among the most aggressive in the business.

Behringer also used the ear as its logo as the human ear is the best test of the perfect sound.

Thus, the tagline "Just listen."

From the 20 digital reverbs that he sold to his friends, Behringer pro-audio equipment is now available in over 120 countries. It was one of the first to cash in on the benefits of moving the production facility to China to cut on costs. Employees number 3,000, and growing.

Behringer also sees the long-term benefits of his decision to move one of the research and development centers to the Philippines.

"I want to hire as many engineers as we can. We are looking at hiring as many as 200 more employees next year. We are proud to say that many of the products we do are made by Filipinos, for the Filipinos," Behringer says.

He said one of the benefits of having Filipinos do the R&D is Filipino engineers test the equipment themselves.

It is not unusual to see Filipino engineers 'strumming their pain' with their fingers at the Behringer Philippines office in Makati, and not stopping until they were satisfied that they got the electric guitar and the amplifier just right.

"Most Filipino engineers are musicians, too. That is why they know perfectly what to do with the equipment," Behringer says.

Filipinos, after all, have high standards when it comes to music.

Aside from the electric guitar and amplifier, Filipino engineers have done research and development for loudspeakers—from small computer speakers to giant 2,000-watt speakers—to mixers for recording studios and lighting equipment.

"Next year, we will be producing digital pianos for just $4,000," Behringer says.

Behringer says he could sell his products at a fraction of the cost of the competitors' because his company owns the supply chain - from the R & D to manufacturing and distribution. And there is no sacrifice on quality.

"We do not sacrifice features, on the contrary, we add," Behringer says.

Behringer says the company will be grow at a more rapid pace next year as more music lovers in the developed world demand recording equipment they could set up in their own homes.

And if Behringer will have his way, those homes will have Behringer equipment with the stamp of Filipino engineering excellence.

China's yuppies say 'I do' to diamonds

BEIJING—China's blushing brides-to-be follow simple rules when shopping for diamond rings.

"The bigger, the better, of course!" said May Yi, a Beijing professional, sitting down with her fiancee for a day of temptation and agony at a jewelry store in the capital.

The idea that diamonds symbolize a lifetime of love has taken root in China, a country that traditionally prefers gold and jade, and where precious stones were unimaginable luxuries just 10 years ago.

Driven by savvy advertising from South Africa's De Beers and a booming middle class, China has vaulted into third place in worldwide diamond jewelry consumption after the United States and Japan, according to the Diamond Administration of China.

"Maybe it's because I've been influenced by Western ideas, but diamond rings are really popular," Yi said. "It's become normal for everyone I know to buy them when getting married."

The China market should overtake Japan within ten years and will also become the world's second-biggest cutting center after India, De Beers estimates.

Most Chinese can't afford a flawless stone set in white gold or platinum, but the sheer number of potential buyers is enough to draw investment from South African, Israeli and Belgian firms.

"Japan, for the diamond business, is yesterday. America is today, because they take a big percent. But I think China will be tomorrow," said Liu Yansheng, China chair of Michael Diamonds, a partner of Cape Town-based Transhex.

The United States currently consumes about 42 percent of world's diamond jewelry, compared to 11 percent for Japan and nine percent for China, he said.

Diamond boom

The domestic diamond jewelry market, worth about $1.2 billion last year, is expected to grow between 15 percent and 20 percent in 2004, according to official figures.

The retail market is fragmented, but the wholesale market is dominated by De Beers, 45-percent owned by mining conglomerate Anglo American.

De Beers, blasted by critics for what they call unfair pricing policies, has been selling diamonds in China for industrial use since the 1950s. Some 80 percent of all diamonds are used as cutting or drilling tools.

But China's market for industrial diamonds—used in energy, electronics and medical applications—is relatively small, at between 70 million yuan ($8.5 million) and 80 million yuan ($9.7 million) a year, with flat growth, executives say.

Its own production of diamonds is tiny, so it relies on imports. Analysts say China may soon exert the same pull on the world diamond market that it has on commodities, precious metals and crude oil.

Demand from China and Russia has helped boost diamond prices by 20 percent worldwide this year, experts and retailers say.

Voracious domestic demand has already caused a shortage of small but high-quality stones, says Inez Ding, president of Antwerp-based China Diamonds Manufacturing.

The wholesale price for a near-flawless, 10-point diamond (one-tenth of a carat) has soared 40 percent in just two years due to Chinese demand, she told Reuters.

Fledgling industry

China set up the Shanghai Diamond Exchange in 2000 to meet demand, but diamond executives say trading has been stone cold since its launch, with the vast majority of rough stones smuggled into the country to evade high taxes.

The exchange said it traded $80.8 million of diamonds in the first quarter.

Similarly, a 17 percent value-added tax has hurt efforts to create a diamond cutting industry, said Michael Diamonds' Liu.

Most of the diamonds now are cut in India, Israel or Belgium.

More than 20,000 people work in diamond polishing in China, with an annual volume of three million carats, De Beers estimates. China's official wholesale market in polished stones was worth $377 million in 2003, it says.

De Beers is increasingly turning to China in order to reduce its dependence on diamond processing giant, India, analysts say.

"China is already the world's biggest jewelry manufacturing center. I think it will take us about 10 years to catch up with India," Liu said, against the din of workers hammering and polishing rings.

Michael Diamonds plans to set up a cutting center with several hundred workers, attracted by diamond workers' wages of just $60 to $120 a month.

Perfect fit

At US diamond trader Galace's sleek, 50 million yuan ($6 million) Asian flagship store in Beijing, diamonds set in platinum are the flavor of the day.

Most customers are couples looking for wedding rings, but there's no shortage of people trying on pieces for themselves.

"When we looked around Asia to open our first store, we pinpointed China as the place with the fastest growth," Jerry Pei, vice general manager of Galace China, told Reuters.

Luxury jewelers Cartier, a unit of Richemont, Bulgari SpA and LVMH are looking to expand in the Chinese market.

Cartier flew in from Paris its Star of the South, a 128 carat diamond mined in Brazil in 1853, for the opening of its new China flagship store on Shanghai's historic Bund waterfront this month. *Reuters*

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Couple retires, creates health and beauty in a farm

By Maurice Malanes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet—Retirement, for many people, means sitting on their rocking chairs as they contemplate on what awaits them. .

But for lawyer Damaso Bangaoet and wife Laurel or Bing, retirement is an opportunity to do freely what they had dreamed of doing when they were tied to their 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. jobs.

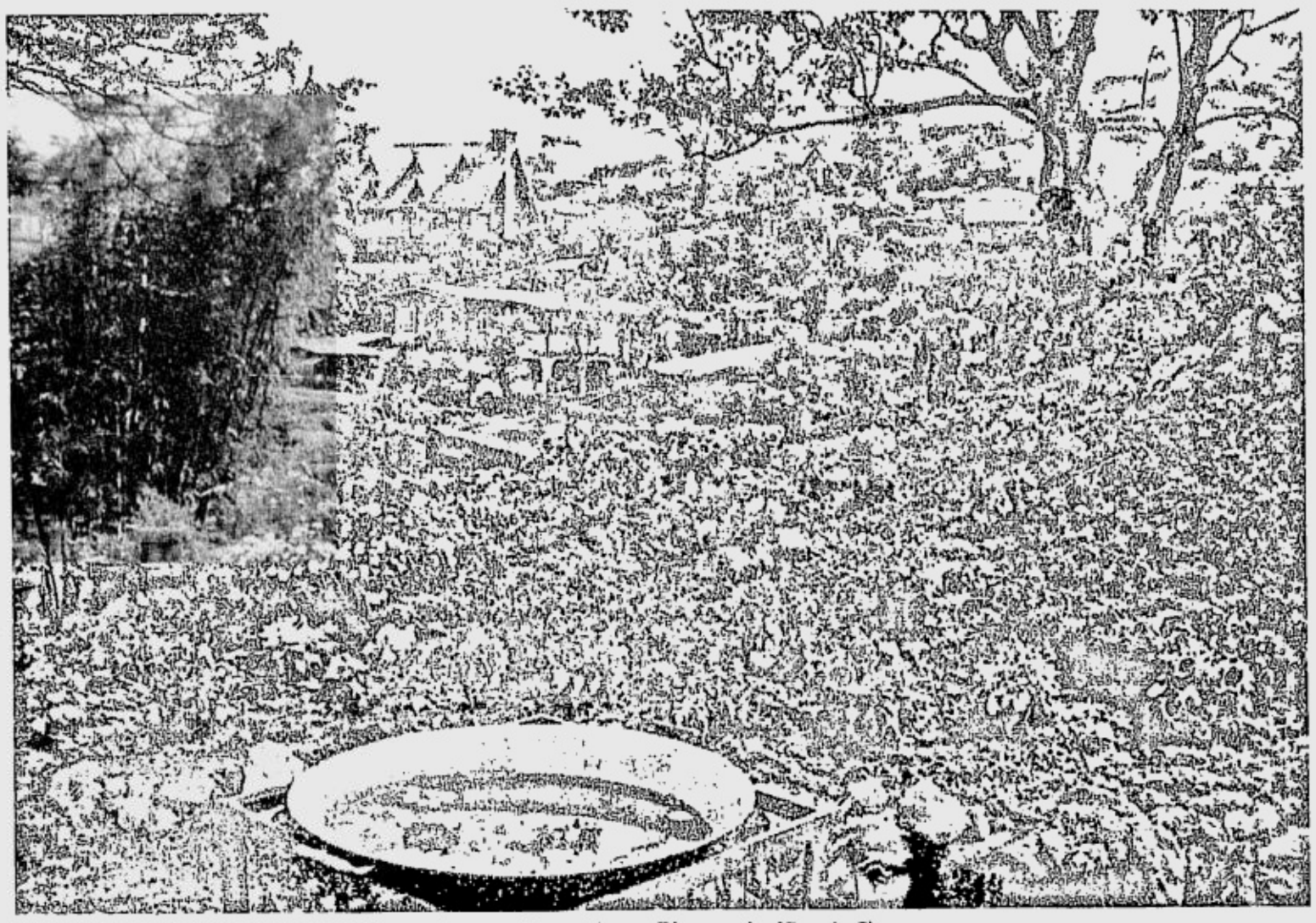
"You slouch on a rocking chair and your mind and muscles get atrophied. You should continue to be productive (even in retirement)," says Bangaoet, a retired executive vice president of the John Hay Management Corp. and former president of the John Hay Poro Point Development Corp.

Retirement is an auspicious time to launch one's second or third career, says Bing, a retired director of the Institute of Physical Education and former acting director of the Center for Culture and the Arts at the Saint Louis University in Baguio City.

For the couple, retirement is a chance to do anything in the world, like traveling overseas, which they did and continue to do.

After having seen much of the world, the Bangaoets feel they must leave some worthwhile legacy for their own community.

From the couple's desire to leave a legacy and make an innovative business dent in their village, Tomay Farms, which was named after their barangay here, was conceived.



A GARDEN patch, which forms part of the ambience at Tomay Farms, 7 km north of Baguio City.

An experience

Tomay Farms, 7 km north of Baguio City along the Halsem Highway here, is not just a business proposition. It is "a community-based farm experience," says Bangaoet.

As an experience, clients or guests do not only munch on fresh organic vegetable salads, roasts and desserts; they savor them. When clients order lettuce salads, a staff runs to the garden to gather the vegetable so clients are assured of life-giving nutrients straight from a patch of organic earth.

Such is the cutting edge of Tomay Farms, which offers not only healthy and fine dining prepared by kitchen staff supervised by Therese Maulbecker, an international cuisine expert.

The place also offers other best things in life that many people usually ignore like smelling the flowers and watching the bees, butterflies and the birds.

It helped a lot that the place sits on a more than 2,000-square-meter rolling hill, most of which are owned by the Bangaoets. Surrounded by pine trees that the Bangaoets planted more than 30 years ago, the place has been landscaped into an organic farm and a mini-park.

There are patches planted to lettuce, beans, strawberry, celery, parsley and various herbs like dill, lemon balm, mint, basil and many more. Surrounding these edibles are various ornamentals such as morning glory, various varieties of daisies, roses, birds of paradise, mums, dahlias, poinsettia, marigold, angel's trumpet, sunflower, and others.

On a fenced off 100-square-meter area, farm animals like chickens, ducks, goats and rabbits live together.

Above the animals' den is a fishpond, which will be filled with tilapia fingerlings when the rain comes in May or June next year.

Part of the experience in Tomay Farms is not just dining, but also walking through the vegetable and strawberry patches, feeding the animals, learning to plant and asking questions about organic farming and its business side. Visitors can also enjoy conversations here over tea or Benguet coffee under a pine tree.

PINOY ENTREPRENEUR

Business sense

The dining area and a mini-trade center, housed on a red-painted canvas-roofed structure beside the Halsema Highway, used to be a shabby auto repair shop with strewn tires and junk and where grasses and other vegetation were poisoned with spilled oil and gasoline.

Since the lot on which the former auto repair shop stood is the entrance to the Bangaoets' property, the Bangaoets convinced the owner to lease the lot to them. With a makeover, the place has made a difference along a highway where shops and stalls do not seem to care about flowers and greenery.

Tomay Farms is like a charming lotus amid murky waters. This is not surprising because Bangaoet is an art critic and his wife is an artist and both of them love and cultivate flowers, trees and vegetables.

As a former Camp John Hay official, Bangaoet conceived the Panagbenga or the Baguio Flower Festival, an innovation that has become a tradition, and which helps earn income for the Baguio City government and for the business sector.

Such innovation is reflected in Tomay Farms, where the stakeholders are not only the Bangaoets but the whole neighborhood as well.

Farmers from neighborhood farms like Betty's Garden, Jaloper's Garden & Pets, Doriano Farms, and Laurels and Trees sell their products at the Tomay Farms' trade center.

To free the participating farmers from undue pressures, the Bangaoets did not require rental for the use of stalls. The farmer-traders just give the Bangaoets 10 percent of their gross sales.

"This is a fair arrangement so traders won't have to worry over having to pay rent during the lean season," says Bangaoet.

"If they sell good, then everybody is happy. If they don't, everybody is sad, but at least their stall is free."

Melting pot

Tomay Farms is also emerging as a melting pot of inter-regional products and talents.

Eduardo Gomez, a retired National Food Administration official and an in-law of the Bangaoets, and his wife would usually bring in dried seafood from Calbayog City and abaca crafts from their hometown in Daraga, Albay.

Cordillera artists also consign their artworks such as paintings, bead necklaces and wristbands, cards, wall decors and other souvenir items. Based on appointments, these artists can teach their craft to those interested.

Igorot knitters and weavers also trade their high-quality sweaters and other clothing.

Tomay Farms, which opened in November, continues to evolve as it seeks to make a difference in doing business.

And if the Bangaoets stress on the plural (farms, not farm), it is because other farmers are involved.

"More importantly, we are not just farmers. We are friends and neighbors as well," says Bangaoet.

Such friendliness and neighborliness, which cannot be valued in monetary terms, are indeed among the bonuses clients and guests get to experience at Tomay Farms.

LAUREL "Bing" Bangaoet communes with her flowers at Tomay Farms.

Satisfying the Pinoy sweet tooth for 40 years

LIKE a treasured heirloom that is handed down from one generation to the next, the secret pastillas de leche recipe of Olympia "Lola Impiang" Sevilla is now in the hands of the third generation who keeps the legacy of Sevilla Sweets' grand matriarch alive.

Now operated by granddaughter Gemma Sevilla-Alcantara, family-owned Sevilla Sweets continues to indulge the Filipinos' sweet tooth with pastillas de leche and other confections that are tastefully and distinctly Pinoy.

According to Alcantara, their products are popular with the locals and *balikbayans*. Sales peak during Christmas season and in August.

"That's the end of summer vacation in western countries when balikbayans hoard Sevilla Sweets products before going back abroad."

To meet demand for their sweets, the company put up stores in Metro Manila. Main store is in San Miguel, Bulacan, while five branches are in Shangri-La Mall, Mandaluyong City; Robinsons Galleria, Quezon City; Greenhills Shopping Center, San Juan; Sta. Lucia East, Cainta; and the newly opened Market! Market! in Fort Bonifacio.

As proof of its product quality and popularity, Sevilla Sweets was specially handpicked by the Department of Trade and Industry to represent Bulacan at the Fiesta Market in Market! Market!

Sweet beginnings

Like most flourishing enterprises, Sevilla Sweets bespeaks of humble beginnings that brought forth success.

"Back in the '60s, Lola Impiang used to serve coffee creamed with fresh carabao's milk, the surplus of which she used in preparing her own recipe of pastillas de leche. She owned a *carinderia* near a market located along the old national road," Alcantara related. The milky confection became a hit, and Lola Impiang had to increase her output to satisfy customer demands.

After some time her family was forced to relocate to an area near the present national road—a minor setback that turned to be a blessing in disguise.

With no more than P70 in his pocket, Alcantara's father—the former San Miguel Mayor Santiago Sevilla—resumed the family's small pastillas business. What little capital they had, the Sevilla's augmented with penny-pinching and hard work until the business grew.

"My parents used to say that the more they have kids, the more their business improves," she recalled.

The relocation proved to be a positive twist. Their customer base expanded, jacked up by transit motorists from Manila traversing up north and North Luzon locals going to Manila. Eventually, the Sevillas had to put up a bigger store and kitchen.

At the start only three people, all family, were engaged in the business. Now they have 12 candy makers and 15 sales people in six stores. Working in shifts, production of sweets only ceases two days in the year, on Good Friday and Christmas Day.

Other sweet variations

From Lola Impiang's pastillas, the family's product list expanded to include other Pinoy favorites, made more special with Sevilla Sweets' distinctive touch.

"We all added our own recipes. My contribution is *yema* with caramelized sugar in the middle—a nice surprise," said Alcantara. Plus other pastillas de leche variation with *keso, langka* and mango; polvoron flavored with *pinipig, pandan* and melon; and various tarts. "Her sister's contribution was *turones de kasuy*.

Alcantara shares their best sellers are pastillas de leche, ube and yema.

Secrets of success

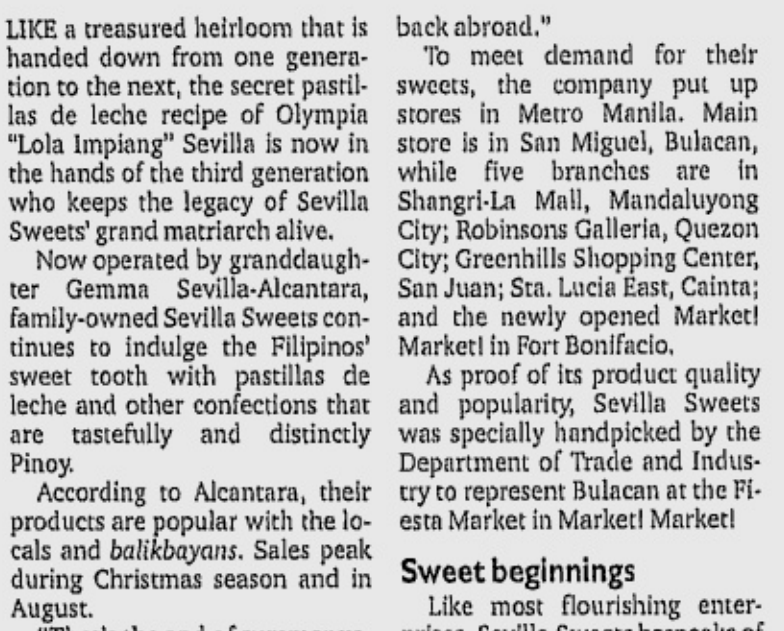
Since they're popular with balikbayans, Alcantara dreams of going into exports in the future. "We wanted to export but we have yet to learn how to prolong the shelf life of our products. But they're getting there. We have orders from as far as Cebu."

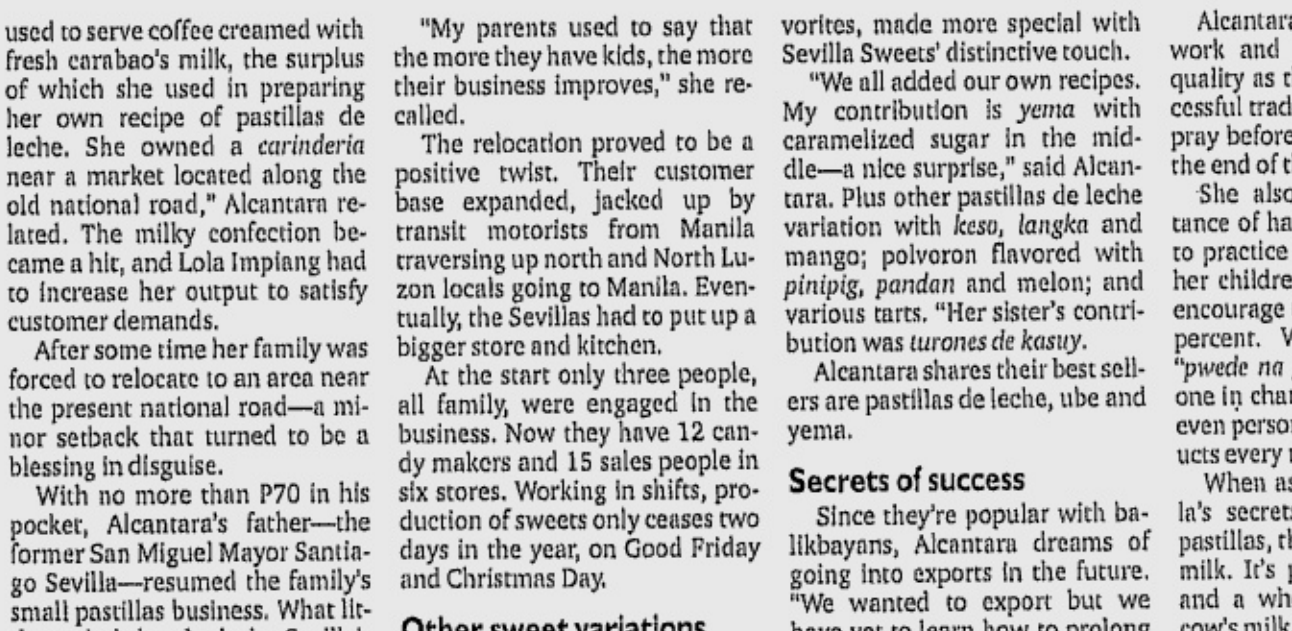
Alcantara cited prayers, hard work and maintaining product quality as their recipes for a successful trade. "I make it a point to pray before the day starts and at the end of the day."

She also stresses the importance of hard work and the need to practice what she preaches to her children and staff. "I always encourage them to give their 100 percent. We don't accept the "*pwede na yan*" attitude. "As the one in charge of quality control I even personally taste all the products every morning"

When asked to divulge her lola's secrets in creating yummy pastillas, this she said, "Carabao's milk. It's purer, smells delicious and a whole lot creamier than cow's milk."

(For inquiries, call 722-1002 in Manila or 0440 764-0250 in Bulacan.)





INQUIRER contributor Rico Hizon is 2004 Most Outstanding Kapampangan awardee for Media. Hizon anchors BBC World's Asia Business Report. He is a graduate of journalism of De La Salle University. Photo shows Rico, wife Melanie Syquia, Pampanga Gov. Mark Lapid, and Jose and Leonora Hizon, Rico's parents.

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Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
(Head Office)

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) invites interested general building contractors currently with Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) License to apply for eligibility and if later found eligible, to bid for the project described below:

Project Title	: Proposed Rehabilitation & Upgrading of the Assembly Hall, 3/F, Cafeteria Bldg.
Scope of Work	: Furnishing of all materials, labor, tools, equipment, technical supervision and other services and performing all operations necessary for the completion of the proposed rehabilitation and upgrading of the assembly hall all in accordance with the approved plans & specification and subject to the terms and conditions of the contract.
Project Location	: A. Mabini cor P. Ocampo St., Manila
Approved Budget	: Twenty Eight Million Seven Hundred Ninety Eight Thousand Four Hundred Fifty Seven Pesos (P28, 798,457.00)
Source of Funding	: Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
Contract Duration	: Sixty calendar days (60 cd)
Minimum Requirement (Criteria)	
PCAB License	: Registration Particulars of at least "Medium B" (Building and Industrial Plant)
Contractor's Construction Experience	: Should have completed within the last five (5) years (1999 to present) at least two (2) projects involving interior works and construction of commercial/corporate projects requiring high-end finishes and excellent workmanship such as 5-Star Hotels, auditoriums, and theaters one of which costs not less than Twenty Five Million Pesos.
Certification of Satisfactory Performance	: Should be able to submit notarized affidavits of Satisfactory Performance for at least two completed projects one of which costs not less than Twenty Five Million Pesos
Net Financial Contracting Capacity computed *as 10 x (Current Asset less Current Liabilities) minus (Value of all on-going contracts including awarded yet to be started) or Credit Line or Cash Deposit Certificate*	: At least Twenty Nine Million Pesos (P29,000,000.00) : At least Two Million Nine Hundred Thousand Pesos (P2,900,000.00)
Eligibility Statement Forms	
Cost of Forms	: Two Hundred Pesos per set (P200.00/set)
Date of Issuance	: December 16 to 27, 2004
Deadline of Submission	: January 5, 2005
Notice of Eligibility/Ineligibility	
Date of Issuance	: January 14, 2005
Bid/Tender Documents Issuance	: Shall be issued only to eligible contractors upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Ten Thousand Pesos (P10,000.00)
Date of Issuance	: January 17 to 18, 2005
Pre-bid Conference	
Date and Time	: January 21, 2005 9:00 AM
Venue	: MR2A 2nd Floor, BSP Main Complex, A. Mabini cor P. Ocampo Sts.
Submission and Opening of Bids	
Deadline of Submission	: February 15, 2005 10:00 AM

For inquiries, please call BAC Secretariat - telephone no. 521-7011 local 3143.

The venue for the issuance and submission of accomplished eligibility statements and bid documents is at the BAC Secretariat, Room 204 2nd Floor - Five Storey Building BSP Complex, A. Mabini cor. P. Ocampo Sts., Manila, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 nn. & 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

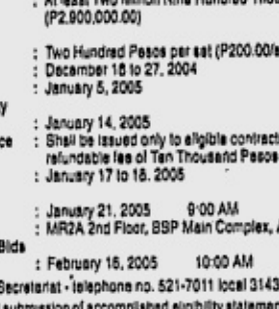
Schedule for issuance of notice of eligibility/ineligibility up to deadline of submission of bids may be subject to change.

The provisions of Republic Act No. 9184 its Implementing Rules and Regulations relative to the bidding and award of contract including its implementation shall apply.

BSP reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any defect or formality therein, or accept such bid or award any part thereof to any contractor/s whose bids is/are evaluation to be most advantageous to BSP. Furthermore, BSP is not obligated to compensate/indemnify the contractor for any expenses or loss that may be incurred in the preparation of bids nor does it guarantee that an award of contract will be made.

(Sgd.) MA. DOLORES B. YUVIENCO
Chairperson

(PDI - Dec. 15 & 25, 2004)



NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

The Public is hereby notified that MRS. LYDIA M. VALERA whose picture appears above has a pending case for Qualified Theft before the Ilagan, Isabela Regional Trial Court Branch 17. Accordingly, an Order for a Warrant of Arrest was issued by the said court.

Any information therefore on her whereabouts is appreciated. Please forward any information that may help/ lead to her arrest/apprehension to M. Lhuillier Pawnshops, Inc. – c/o Mrs. Myrna S. Gimenez at (02) 894-39-69 and (02) 813-70-04 to 09 and RTC Branch 17 Tel No. ( ).

(PDI--Dec. 26, 2004)

PHILAM LIFE

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

THE PUBLIC IS HEREBY NOTIFIED THAT MS. SUSAN A. LLANES WHOSE PICTURE AND ADDRESS APPEAR BELOW HAS CEASED TO REPRESENT THE PHILIPPINE AMERICAN LIFE AND GENERAL INSURANCE COMPANY IN ANY CAPACITY WHATSOEVER IN VIEW OF THE EXPIRATION OF HER AGENCY CONTRACT LAST APRIL 11, 2001.

MS. SUSAN A. LLANES
Nansuagao, Caoayan, 2700 Ilocos Sur

ANY TRANSACTION MADE OR ENTERED INTO BY THIS PERSON FOR AND IN BEHALF OF OUR COMPANY AFTER APRIL 11, 2001 IS NOT VALID AND WILL NOT BE HONORED BY US.

(PDI – December 26, 2004)

ODA-funded project seeks

Project Director

with strong project development and local governance background

Job Description

The Project Director shall:

- ✔ be responsible for over-all management of a program of skills transfer, training and advice on project development and management for local government units and local institutions.
- ✔ market the project services to qualified LGUs, line agencies, training institutions and other potential partners.
- ✔ manage, coordinate and administer Project funds to achieve Project goals and objectives.
- ✔ report directly to the NEDA Regional Director in Caraga and the Donor's Department Program Manager

Qualifications

- ✔ Minimum of seven years experience in designing and implementing training programs for LGUs particularly in project identification, feasibility study preparation, project financing, project prioritization. Direct involvement in social marketing for public services. Experience with an international organization an advantage. Knowledge of government procurement system and auditing/accounting rules and regulations an asset.
- ✔ Graduate of MBA, MPA, MAEcon or related field
- ✔ Excellent communication skills-both written and oral
- ✔ Demonstrated understanding of, and commitment to gender and development
- ✔ Willing to be assigned in Caraga for the next three years

Send your application letter with resumé and photo on or before Monday, January 10, 2005 to:

The Regional Director
NEDA Caraga Regional Office
Nimfa Tiu Bldg., J. Rosales Avenue
Butuan City
Email : neda13@bayandsl.com or
neda13caraga@yahoo.com

DepED

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Education
DepED Complex, Meralco Ave., Pasig City

Invitation for Bids

Loan No.: 1654-PHI: Secondary Education Development and Improvement Project (SEDIP)

IFB No.: ADB-SEDIP-2004-TX

1. The Republic of the Philippines through the Department of Education (DepED) has received a loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). It is intended to apply part of the proceeds of this loan to eligible payments under the contracts for the Supply and Delivery of Makabayan Textbooks (TXs) and Teachers' Manuals (TMs) under SEDIP.
2. The Department of Education (DepED) through the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the Supply and Delivery of Makabayan TXs and TMs in Music, Arts, Physical Education and Health (MAPEH) 1st – 4th year to secondary schools under SEDIP, as follows:
   - 2.1 Lot 1: 249,198 copies of MAPEH I Textbooks and 3,899 copies of Teachers' Manuals
   - 2.2 Lot 2: 216,190 copies of MAPEH II Textbooks and 3,448 copies of Teachers' Manuals
   - 2.3 Lot 3: 181,802 copies of MAPEH III Textbooks and 2,873 copies of Teachers' Manuals
   - 2.4 Lot 4: 154,855 copies of MAPEH IV Textbooks and 2,612 copies of Teachers' Manuals

   Estimated Printing and Delivery Completion Period: 120 days.
   Indicative Printing and Delivery Dates: April to July 2005.
3. The mode of procurement shall be through International Shopping (IS). A bidder may opt to bid on any or all of the lots required.
4. Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information or inspect the Bidding Documents from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. starting **December 28, 2004** at the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) Office, Ground Floor, Rizal I Building, DepED Complex, Pasig City, 1605 Philippines, Tel. Nos. (632) 636-6542 / 633-9342 or at Fax No. (632) 635-3762. Information is also available at http://www.deped.gov.ph or www.procurementservice.org.
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents in English may be purchased by interested eligible bidders upon submission of a written application to the address given in paragraph 4 and payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of Php 1,000.00. The method of payment will be cash, cashier's check, manager's check, or certified check.
6. All bids shall be accompanied by a bid security of not less than 2.5% of the total bid amount, in Philippine peso or in any freely convertible currency of eligible countries and shall be delivered in accordance with the Instructions to Bidders on or before **10:00 a.m. on January 23, 2005** at Bulwagan ng Karunungan, Rizal I Building, DepED Complex, Meralco Avenue, Pasig City, Philippines
7. Prior to bid opening, a pre-bid conference shall be conducted on **January 10, 2005** at 10:00 a.m. at the same address indicated in paragraph 6.
8. The DepED reserves the right to accept and reject any or all bids and to annul the bidding process at any time prior to award of Contract (s) without incurring any liability to the affected bidders and to waive any minor informality or non-conformity in a bid which does not constitute a material deviation, provided such waiver will not prejudice or affect competitive ranking of any bid.

(Sgd.) JUAN MIGUEL M. LUZ
Undersecretary and Chairperson
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – December 19 & 26, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Kalinga
Municipality of Tinglayan

Invitation for Bids (IFB)

Date: December 26, 2004
Contract ID No.: SP-066-IN-01
World Bank Loan No.: 4446 PH

1. The Government of the Philippines has received a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development towards the cost of Local Government Finance and Development and intends to apply part of the funds to cover eligible payments under the Contract for the ***Construction and Repair of School Buildings***. Bidding is open to all bidders from eligible source countries as defined in the *Guidelines: Procurement under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits.*
2. The ***Municipality of Tinglayan, Province of Kalinga*** invites sealed bids from eligible sources for the *Construction of 2 units- 2 classrooms @ barangay Bugnay and Bangad; 1 unit- 3 classrooms @ Poblacion Tinglayan and Repair of 2 units- 2 classrooms at barangay Sumdel.*
3. Bidding documents may be purchased starting *December 27, 2004 to January 25, 2005 from 8:00 AM- 5:00 PM* at the *Municipal Treasury Office during office hours (8:00 am to 5:00 pm) Municipal Hall Building, Tinglayan, Kalinga* upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of *Five Thousand pesos (Php 5,000.00)* or its equivalent in a freely-convertible currency, for each set. Interested bidders may obtain further information at the same address.
4. Bids shall be valid for a period of *ninety (90) days* after bid opening and must be accompanied by security of *One Hundred Seventy Thousand Five Hundred Pesos (Php 170,500.00)* in a form of cash, certified check, bank guarantee or its equivalent in a convertible currency, and shall be delivered to the *Office of the BAC Secretariat, Treasury Office, Municipal Building, Poblacion, Tinglayan, Kalinga Province* on or before *10:00 am, January 25, 2005* at which time they will be opened in the presence of the bidders who wish to attend.
5. A pre-bid conference will be held at *10:00 A.M.* on *January 11, 2005* at the *Sanggunian Bayan Session Hall, 2nd Floor, Municipal Building, Poblacion, Tinglayan, Kalinga Province.*

(Sgd.) Engr. Roberto A. Chulsi
BAC Chairman

(PDI - Dec. 26, 2004)

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Republic of the Philippines
MARINDUQUE STATE COLLEGE
Tanza, Boac, Marinduque

Please be informed that the **MARINDUQUE STATE COLLEGE** (MSC) Board of Trustees announces the opening of the position of

College President

The following are the qualifications for the position;

1. Filipino citizen
2. Preferably Doctoral Degree holder
3. Preferably not more than 60 years old at the time of appointment as President of the College
4. Have at least five (5) years of managerial capability
5. Morally upright

Applicants are required to submit clearance from the following:

1. Ombudsman
2. Civil Service Commission
3. National Bureau of Investigation
4. Sandiganbayan

Applicants are also required to submit the following:

1. Detailed Curriculum Vitae
2. Vision-Mission for the College
3. Neuro Exam
4. Medical Certificate

Interested applicants are requested to submit 5 (copies) of formal application, and all requirements on or before January 26, 2005 to:

Com. Ma. Cristina D. Padolina
Commission on Higher Education
DAP Bldg., San Miguel Avenue
Ortigas Center, Pasig City
(02) 638-48-70

or

Mrs. Proserfina M. Mablog
Coordinator
Search for MSC Presidency
Marinduque State College
Tanza, Boac, Marinduque
(042) 332-20-28

VICTOR S. VITTO, SR. Ed.D.
Officer-In-Charge

Republic of the Philippines
HOME GUARANTY CORPORATION

INVITATION TO BID

The HOME GUARANTY CORPORATION (HGC), a government-owned and controlled corporation with office address at Jade Bldg., 335 Sen. Gil J. Puyat Avenue, Makati City invites all interested parties to participate in the bidding of the long-term MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE OPERATIONS OF THE COMMONWEALTH MARKET.

PROPERTY/PROJECT	:	COMMONWEALTH MARKET
LOCATION	:	Commonwealth Enterprise Zone (Block 6), Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City
TOTAL FLOOR AREA	:	17,551±43 sqm on a 2.42 hectares property, more or less
DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY	:	2-storey building with basement comprising of the main building (or a total of 3 floors) and 2-level storey terrace building with basement (or a total of 3 floors), both of which consist of different stall sections plus the stalls in front of the market and those outside the market's periphery totaling to approximately 2,312 stalls registered under various vendors/ stallholders.
TERMS OF LEASE	:	Straight lease for 20 years with negotiation for renewal on the 18th year; Three (3) months deposit; one (1) year advance rental; and A minimum of 5% escalation per annum.
MINIMUM BID	:	P1.5 Million monthly rental rate net of all taxes and fees due Local and National Government Authorities

SCHEDULE OF BIDDING ACTIVITIES IS AS FOLLOWS:

Issuance of Bid Documents & Eligibility Requirements	January 3 -7 2005
Pre-bid Conference	January 8 , 2005
Start of Submission of Eligibility Requirements	January 24-28, 2005
Deadline of Submission and Opening of Eligibility Reqts.	January 28, 2005
Issuance of Notice of Eligibility	January 31, 2005
Start of Submission of the Bid Proposal	Feb. 15, 2005
Deadline of Submission and Opening of Bids	March 1, 2005

The bidder is advised to inspect the subject property to determine its actual condition. Particulars of the bidding may be obtained from the HGC Project Management and Acquired Assets Disposition Group (PMAADG) at the 4th Floor Jade Building, 335 Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, Makati City. Other inquiries relative to the bidding may be inquired at telephone nos. 897-3290 and 8973286.

The bid documents and eligibility requirements may be obtained for a non-refundable fee of **FIFTY THOUSAND PESOS (P50,000.00)** from the Committee for the Bidding of Management and Administration of the Operations of the Commonwealth Market (COMMITTEE) starting **January 3, 2005** at the PMAADG office.

A Pre-bid conference will be held on **January 8, 2005** at **2:00 P.M.**, 5th Floor HGC Conference Room, Jade Building, 335 Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, Makati City.

Eligibility requirements/documents should be submitted in a sealed envelope to the COMMITTEE **on or before January 28, 2005.** The eligibility envelopes shall be opened on **January 28, 2005 at 2:00 P.M.**, at 5th Floor HGC Conference Room, Jade Building, 335 Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, Makati City. The eligibility of registered bidders shall be evaluated using a non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria based on the eligibility requirements specified in Annex B of the Terms of Reference.

All bids should be submitted to the COMMITTEE on or before **March 1, 2005 at 2:00 P.M.** The sealed bid should be accompanied by a bid bond equivalent to 10% of the one year rental in the form of cash or certified manager's/cashier's check payable to HGC.

The Opening of Bids will be held at **2:00 P.M. on March 1, 2005** at the 5th Floor, Conference Room of the HGC Office.

The HGC reserves the right to reject any or all offers; to waive any defects or to accept such offer as may be considered most advantageous to the Corporation.

MA. BELEN S. FABELLA
Chairwoman
Committee for the Bidding of
Management and Administration of
Operations of the Commonwealth Market

(PDI-Dec. 26, 2004 & Jan. 2, 2005)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
THE CITY OF OLONGAPO
Olongapo City Hall
Rizal Avenue, Olongapo City

INVITATION TO QUALIFY AND BID

The City of Olongapo is inviting interested parties to qualify and bid for the Olongapo City Public Utilities Department Modernization Build-Operate-Transfer/Private Sector Participation Project ("Project").

The Project will be implemented as a Contract-Add Operate (CAO) scheme under the BOT Law and will comprise (1) the performance of rehabilitation works on the City-owned electric power distribution assets; (2) the planning, financing, design, engineering, construction, installation, testing and commissioning of new electric power distribution facilities, and (3) the management, operation repair and maintenance of the integrated distribution system by the winning bidder/project proponent for a concession period of 25 years. The upgraded and rehabilitated power distribution system including all new facilities shall be transferred to the City, at no cost, at the end of said period.

The competitive bidding for the Project will be conducted in accordance with the procurement guidelines of the BOT Law (Republic Act No. 6957, as amended by Republic Act No. 7718) and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). The bidding will follow the rules prescribed for the Simultaneous Qualification of Bidders or the Three Envelope System, as defined in the IRR.

The Tender Documents (consisting of the Information Memorandum, Instructions to Bidders Bid Forms and Draft Agreement) may be obtained from the Public Utilities Department, Olongapo City Hall, Rizal Avenue, Olongapo City, starting on *December 15, 2004* up to *January 10, 2005* upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Fifty Thousand Pesos *(Php 50,000)* Only those who purchased the Tender Documents will be qualified to submit bids or proposals.

Bidders are invited to attend the Pre-Bid Conference scheduled on *January 21, 2005*

The deadline for the submission of bids or proposals is on *March 31, 2005*

The City reserves the right to reject any or all bids, declare a failure of bidding or not award the contract for any justifiable and reasonable ground where the award of the contract will not redound to the benefit of the City.

The City also assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any expense incurred in the preparation of their bids or proposals.

(Sgd.) MANUEL QUIJANO
Chairman - Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - Dec. 12, 19 & 26, 2004)

No more 'knocking on doors and tapping on windows'

By Amy R. Remo

NOBODY wanted to apply for The Elecrolux Group when it first posted its job openings for sales people in 2001.

Everybody thought it was a job that would require one to, "knock on your door, ring on your bell, tap on your windows too..."—its ad campaign in the '80s.

"We had to post another ad without our company name just to get applications. In 2001, we only had seven sales people in our organization," recalls Vichai Lorattawoult, president of Electrolux Philippines Inc.

After it stopped selling its products in the country in the late '90s, Electrolux came back in 2001 as part of its worldwide expansion.

Electrolux is the world's largest producer of powered appliances for kitchen, cleaning and outdoor use such as refrigerators, cookers, chain saws and garden tractors. More than 55 million Electrolux products are sold each year in more than 150 countries.

This time, however, there were no more sales people knocking on consumers' doors when Electrolux was relaunched in April 2002.

Instead, Electrolux products were made available for the first time, in mass retail stores with Electrolux and White Westinghouse as its carrier brands.

After two and a half years, the company made a complete turnaround from the Electrolux people used to know.

Lorattawoult says the performance of Electrolux has more than met their expectations.

"We have already achieved one of our short-term goals, which is to become one of the market leaders in this country," says Lorattawoult.

Electrolux now has about 500 dealers nationwide and is expecting 2004 sales growth to be six times its sales in 2002.

Its bestsellers are refrigerators, washing machines and vacuum cleaners. Refrigerators account for 70 percent of the company's total sales, with about 40,000 to 50,000 units sold this year.

One of the reasons for their success, according to Lorattawoult, is having a strong brand.

Lorattawoult explains that although the Philippine market is still young for some of its innovations such as the cordless vacuum cleaner, he believes that the market is continuously growing and that sales would soon pick up.

Another reason for our success is having better after sales services, particularly in product repairs, says Lorattawoult.

He says that even before they started reselling products in the country, they have been providing after-sales services to their clients.

Electrolux also provides necessary facilities for these services.

"What differentiates us from the rest is that we have all the spare parts readily available," says Lorattawoult.

While it may take weeks or even months for centers to repair other brands, repair of Electrolux appliances may only take a few days.

Lorattawoult adds they provide adequate training to people in every authorized service center to ensure that products are handled well.

"Another key reason for our success is having well-trained personnel in our organization," says Lorattawoult.

For three days, each personnel is trained about the organization and its products. He or she will then have to undergo an on-the-job training before being assigned to an outlet.

But it does not end there, according to Lorattawoult. Each month, there is an ongoing training for all personnel about product knowledge of both new and old products, as well as about "frequently-asked questions."

They are also given regular updates regarding current company situation and market movements.

"We have to constantly refresh their memory about all our products to ensure better service to customers," says Lorattawoult.

Plans for 2005

As for 2005, Electrolux plans to expand its distribution to include other places in the Visayas region such as Tacloban and Dumaguete, and also in Northern Luzon, particularly in Ilocos Norte.

Lorattawoult says the company wants to tap the smaller cities and the surrounding islands in these areas.

"We would like to increase our dealers by at least half (from the current of about 500) so that our sales in the provinces would match sales in Metro Manila," says Lorattawoult.

To date, 60 percent of the sales come from Metro Manila, while 40 percent are from the provinces. Sales in one Metro Manila outlet is usually equivalent to sales of several outlets in the provinces.

Lorattawoult adds consumers could expect more product innovations from the group.

They will also open new outlets, hire more people in the sales force and provide "promodisers" in each outlet.

A "promodiser," according to Lorattawoult, is a sales person equipped with adequate training regarding Electrolux products. Each outlet has at least one promodiser to help it sell Electrolux products.

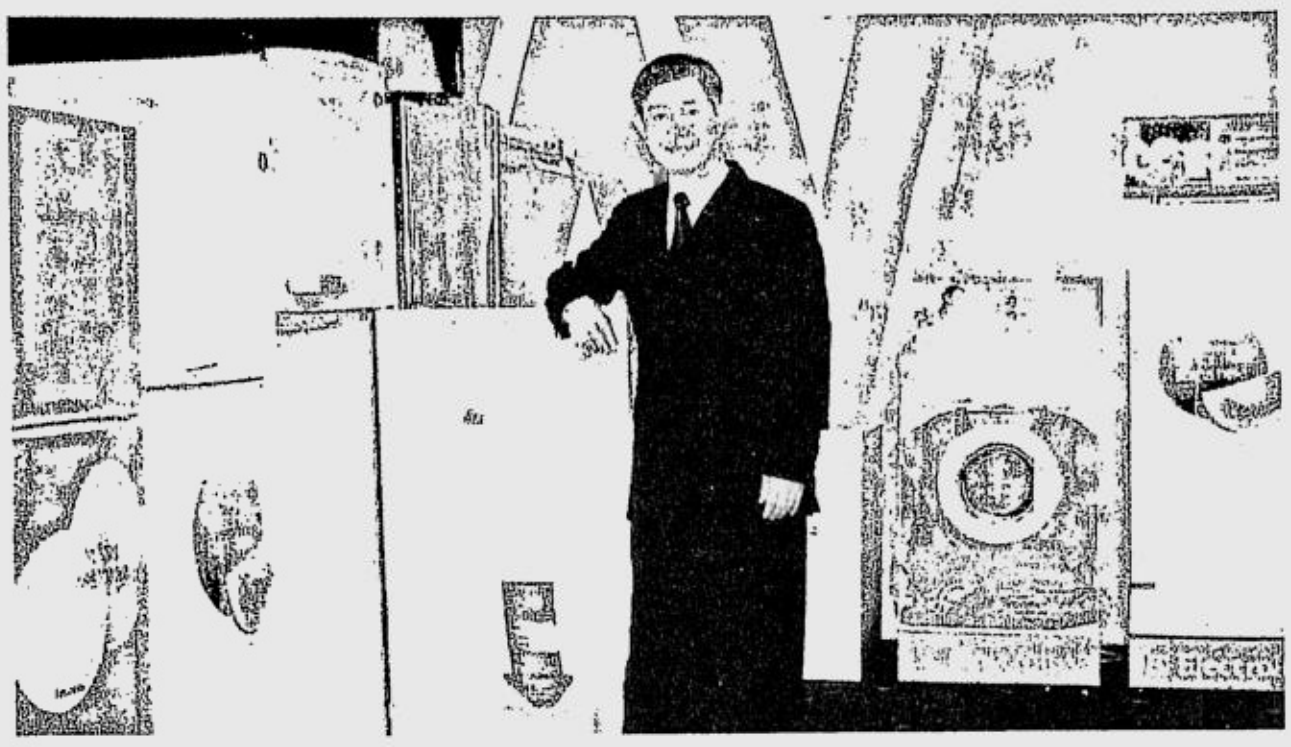
In line with this, Electrolux will be beefing up its training for employees so employees will meet international standards and be at par with other Electrolux employees worldwide.

You have to take care of the people in the organization because they are the ones who drive the business, says Lorattawoult.

He says cross-culture opportunities are highly possible for Filipinos. In fact, several of them have already been assigned to handle regional assignments.

Lorattawoult adds they want to be the "preferred employer" or the company of choice, which is evident right now in the hundreds of applications they receive for each job posting they put up.

He shares that some of the applicants are already managers and high ranking officials in top multinational firms.



LORATTAWOULT: Having achieved our short-term goal, Electrolux now sets its sights to becoming the market leader in each country in the years to come.

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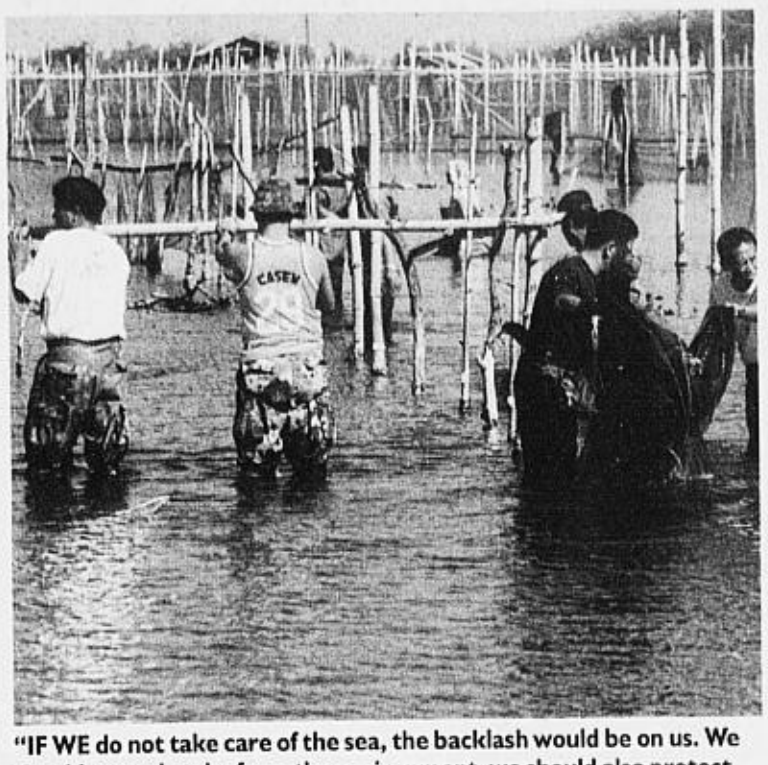


"IF WE do not take care of the sea, the backlash would be on us. We should not only take from the environment, we should also protect it," states Maximo Abesamis, 67, one of the biggest names in the aquaculture business in Pangasinan.

Fish cage pioneer asks operators to take better care of the sea

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan—The aquaculture industry is considered environmentally hazardous, but the pioneer of fish cage operations in the country said the industry will not harm the environment if operators "take care of the sea."

"It's all a matter of taking care of the sea, and this means taking care of the soil in the seabed," Maximo Abesamis, 67, one of the biggest names in the aquaculture business in Pangasinan.

Abesamis, an agriculture graduate of the University of the Philippines at Los Baños and who introduced the fish cage technology in the country in 1995, has been convincing his fellow aquaculture operators to "invest a little in taking care of the sea because it is the source of our livelihood."

"If we do not take care of the sea, the backlash would be on us. We should not only take from the environment, we should also protect it," Abesamis said.

He cited as example what happened in 2002 when a massive fish kill hit Bolinao town because of pollution caused by the aquaculture industry itself.

He was barely affected by the fishkill.

How did he do it?

"By following certain systems and using certain products that protect the soil," Abesamis said, adding that he practices "demand feeding," uses "extroded feeds" and applies "good bacteria" on the seabed below his fishcages.

In 2002, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources pointed out that overfeeding bangus (milkfish) stocks in the fish cages had resulted in the accumulation of decomposing materials in the seabed, causing widespread pollution that killed millions worth of bangus.

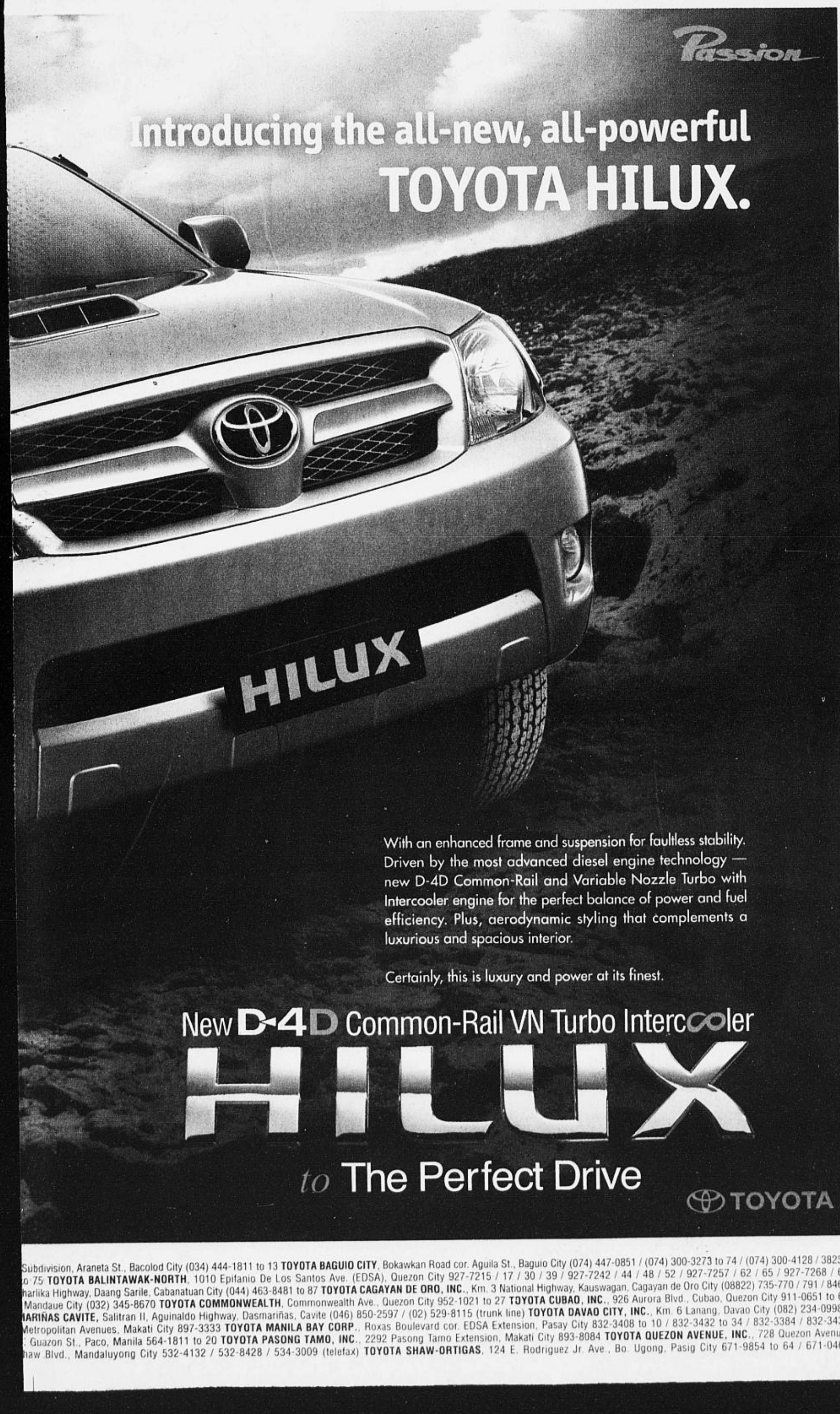
Most operators were not really into agriculture or fishery. But lawyers, doctors and other professionals joined the bandwagon when the fish cage industry was at its peak.

"They get a caretaker who knows no better about the industry and caretaker gives feeds to the bangus nonstop," he said.

Abesamis practices "demand feeding." "When the bangus stops eating, we stop giving feeds so nothing is wasted and nothing accumulates in the seabed," he said.

He uses "extroded" feeds which are 100-percent cooked as compared to pellets which are 20-30 percent cooked.

"Because extroded feeds is fully cooked, it is absorbed better by the fish. It has a higher protein content and is easily digestible which result in shorter growing period for the bangus. Extroded feeds also mean the wastes from the bangus is easily decomposed," he said.



Superbowl aims to double restos by next year

SUPER Bowl of China ends 2004 with three new branches, bringing to eight the total number of its outlets. Super Bowl of China opened its newest branch at the Promenade in Greenhills, San Juan, a few days before the new year. This came just four months after the restaurant expanded its operation with the opening of two branches in August 2004.

Super Bowl of China-Greenhills covers 200 square meters with a seating capacity of 144 and offers a new choice in dining destination for the various market segments around the place—families, students, workers, and executives in San Juan, Pasig and nearby areas. The location of the new branch is near many shops and stores, cinemas, theater and the famous Greenhills bazaars that is a year-round crowd drawer.

Big Buddha Restaurant Inc. (BBRI) which operates Super Bowl of China (and the Big Buddha Restaurant in Greenbelt 3, Makati) is targeting to open at least eight to nine more stores in 2005, or double the current number of its branches. Already, three new stores are scheduled to open next year: in Gateway Mall, Cubao; Tomas Morato, Quezon City and in Blue Wave, Marikina.

BBRI managing director Richmond Yang believes this target is attainable given the strong following the restaurant enjoys and the success of the branches that opened this year.

Yang believes exploring strong and meaningful ties with the right partners is necessary to accelerate growth and expansion, hence in July 2004, it decided to open its doors to potential franchise partners—and rightfully so, considering that global business trends reflect a strong growth area involving franchising, with three times higher level of profitability and success rate compared to starting a new business. The Philippine franchising industry is one of the most developed in Asia, with restaurant and fast food chains as leading franchising businesses due to the impressive growth of the food sector.

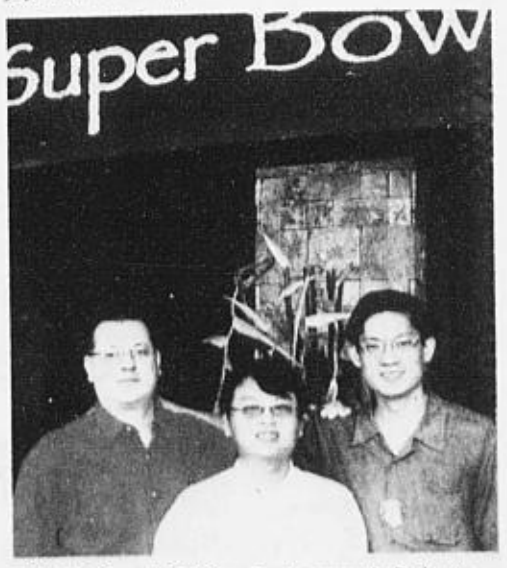
In July 2004, Super Bowl of China embarked on major activities meant to prepare its management and operations staff for the demands of franchising. Two major activities include an intensive

MyRestaurant marketing seminar to level up the franchising skills of its personnel and staff and its participation in the F3 Franchise for Filipinos exhibit mounted by the Association of Filipino Franchisers Inc. (AFFI) held in July 2004.

After five successful branches in SM Megamall; Jupiter Street in Makati City; Glorietta 4 in Ayala Center; Chefs Avenue in Festival Mall, Alabang; and at the 2nd level of SM City North Edsa, Super Bowl of China's first franchise outlet opened in Eastwood City Walk 2 in Libis, Quezon City. A week after, the second franchised outlet opened in SM City, Fairview.

More than being a tool to attain growth targets, opening more branches is part of the company's commitment to bring the Super Bowl of China experience to as many people as possible. More branches in strategic locations meant convenience and easy access for diners.

Sustaining public patronage is definitely not an easy task considering the number of restaurants being opened, each one offering something new and interesting to diners. Super Bowl of China never fails to sustain public patronage with its tested formula: serving a super experience—a smart combination of great-tasting Chinese and Asian cuisine, big servings meant for sharing, affordable pricing, warm and personal service enjoyed in a relaxing Asian-western ambience.



SUPER Bowl of China Restaurant's Robert Epes, Richmond Yang and Luigi Vera.

B6

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13% P.A. FIXED FOR THE FIRST 3 YRS. 15% P.A. FIXED FOR THE NEXT 12 YRS

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e-mail us at: esbabas@unionbankph.com or visit us at: www.unionbankph.com

RESIDENTIAL

QUEZON CITY	MIN BID
1. Condo / Unit-1,4/F, San Jose Condo #119 Sct Fernandez St. Brgy Sacred Heart / F.A.- 42 w/ parking slot (near church)	900,000
2. H&L/# 269 M Aquino St Banlat Rd,T.Sora LA-120 / FA-191 (near St Anthony Schl & NPC Subd)	1,700,000
CAINTA - Riverside Subd.	**MIN BID**
3. H&L / # 3 Maganda St, Sto Domingo LA-341/FA-272(near junction)	1,600,000
MUNTINLUPA - Tunasan	**MIN BID**
Victoria Hms. Subd.- via Magsaysay Rd.	
4. L-125-B-3-A, Almond St/LA-436	1,069,000
ANTIPOLO, RIZAL	**MIN BID**
5. L-20 B-17, Jerusalem St Ph-5 Brgy Dulan/LA-120 (via Tikling Junction & Melendres Subd.)	332,000
6. L-23 B-10, Cottonwood Hts. Bayugo /LA-266 (near Sumulong)	2,049,000
7. L-21 B-2, Cottonwood Hts. Bayugo /LA-355 (near Sumulong)	2,734,000
8. Lot-47 Blk-18,Park Ridge Est. Ph -3 (via Valley Golf) LA-811	2,058,000
9. L-17 B-1, Beverly St, Sta Barbara-1 Luxury Est,Mission Hills Colaique/LA-1,021 (near Pines City)	4,102,000
ANGONO RZL.- via Antipolo	**MIN BID**
10. L-6 B-2, Mills St, Sta Monica Classic Est,Ph-3,Mission Hills Brgy Colaique/LA-540 (near Pines City)	2,096,000
PASIG - Ortigas Center	**MIN BID**
11. Condo -4BR, 5TB, Maid's Rm. Pkng /Unit-2602 AIC Gold Twr. Emerald Ave / F.A.- 187.17' (near Robinsons & Poveda Schl)	6,900,000
VALENZUELA CITY	**MIN BID**
Access via East Service Rd., Malinta Exit	
12. Lot / Lot-551-A-2-A-3, Pineda Compd, Bonifacio St /LA-1,114	2,241,000
CALOOCAN CITY	**MIN BID**
13. Lot / Lot-25 & 26 Blk -31, 2nd St , Gracepark / L.A - 388.60 (In between 3rd & 4th Avenue)	4,300,000
MALABON	**MIN BID**
14. H&L / # 8 Don Basilio Bautista Blvd , Brgy Hulong Duhat L.A -866 / F.A -847.40	7,100,000
BULACAN - MALOLOS	**MIN BID**
15. H&L / Lot 2 & 3 Blk-17,Desta Ave. cor 1st St., Desta Hms. Brgy. Atlag LA-515/FA-293.84 (near Sto. Cristo Diversion Rd.)	3,100,000
BICOL - Camarines Sur	**MIN BID**
- near Calagbangon, Sipocot crossing -	
16. Lot-450-B, Maharlika H-way / LA1,820	120,000
17. Lot-450-C, Maharlika H-way / LA1,820	120,000
TAGAYTAY CITY	**MIN BID**
In between Sta. Rosa short-cut & Aguinaldo H-way	
18. Lot/Lot-8, Tagaytay-Calamba Rd ,Brgy. Tolentino-West (over looking Taal Lake) L.A - 2,156 * WITH LIS PENDENS *	20,000,000
TARLAC CITY	**MIN BID**
19. Agro-Indl / Lot-3871-D Sapang Maragul,Tibag /LA-10,001-near arch	3,315,000
NUEVA ECIJA - Cab. City	**MIN BID**
# 529 Pag-Asa, Daan Sarili (near L.T.O.)	
20. Lot 3-A-6 / NLA-1,820.62	400,000
21. Lot 2-A / NLA-2,535.36	1,388,000
22. 2 Sty Res'l / Lot-2-G N.L.A -1,861.9 / F.A.-138	4,022,000
CAVITE - Mla. Southwoods	**MIN BID**
23. Lot-16 Block-1, Ph.-1, Brgy. Baybay, Carmona / LA-1,224	6,577,000
CAVITE- Naic, Brgy. Palangue	**MIN BID**
Mango Orchard Res'l. & Farm Estates	
24. Lot-6 Blk -18 / L.A - 1,468	1,468,000
25. Lot-5 Blk.-19 / L.A - 964	964,000
26. Lot-6 Blk -19 / L.A - 1,194	1,194,000
27. Lot-4 Blk -19-A / L.A - 2,953	2,953,000
28. Lot-10 Blk -19-B / L.A - 2,245	2,245,000

RESIDENTIAL

MAKATI - Brgy. Singkamas	MIN BID
Maskardo St. (beside Mkti. Coliseum)	
29. Lot / Lot-1 Blk-23 / L.A.- 282	3,600,000
30. Lot / Lot-2 Blk-23 / L.A - 315 * WITH EXISTING CASE *	4,023,000
Orchard Res'l. Estates and Golf & Country Club - Salitran, Dasmarinas, Cavite	
FAIRWAY LOTS	
31. Lot-27 Blk.-17 / L.A.- 828	3,147,000
32. Lot-52 Blk.-17 / L.A.- 1,130	4,294,000
33. Lot-93 Blk.-48 / L.A.- 783	2,976,000
NON - FAIRWAY LOTS	
34. Lot-09 Blk.-37 / L.A.- 672	2,016,000
35. Lot-35 Blk.-37 / L.A.- 687	2,061,000
36. Lot-67 Blk.-48 / L.A.- 506	1,518,000

COMMERCIAL

MAKATI CITY	MIN BID
37. Condo. 5/F Millenium Plaza Mkti Ave cor Eduque St/FA-261.24	17,765,000
38. Lot-1-B & 2-B, Buendia Ave cor. Marconi St / T.L.A.-472	20,636,000
MANILA	**MIN BID**
39. 2/F KP Twr.,CM Recto Ave cor. Juan Luna St / FA-658	28,792,000
PARANAQUE - Across Evacom	**MIN BID**
40. Comm'l.Lot w/ Bldgs / Lot 7-B Angelina Canaynay Ave., San Dionisio / LA-3,066 / FA-1,460	52,102,000
QUEZON CITY	**MIN BID**
41. Lot w/ Warehse / Lot 8 & 9 Blk-S-27, Timog Ave/LA-1,380 FA-1,500 (near Unionbank Br. & GMA-7) * ON LEASE *	70,000,000
42. Lot w/ Warehse/#165 Roosevelt Ave., San Francisco Del Monte / LA-5,641 / FA-3,454 (near Unionbank Br -Del Monte)	140,000,000
43. Lot w/ Warehse./ # 138 Gen Luis cor. Pascola Rd., Brgy Nagkaisang Nayon,Novaliches L.A.- 49,504 / F.A.- 23,384	300,000,000
NUEVA ECIJA - Cab. City	**MIN BID**
# 529 Pag-Asa, Daan Sarili (near L.T.O.)	
44. Agri Lot /Lot-3-B/NLA-37,041	2,366,000
45. Commi. Lot w/ Whse & Offc. Lot-2-H/NLA-2,260.67/FA-580	5,098,000
VALENZUELA CITY	**MIN BID**
46. Ind'l Lot / Lot 303-B-2, Maysan Net L.A.-11,174 (via F. Alarcon & P. Lanozo Sts) *No Right of Way*	5,794,000
47. Ind'l Lot / Lot-2, 6-A, 4-A & B 3, 6-B-1 & 2, Maysan *No right of way* Net LA-12,516 (via Viongco St)	8,003,000
48. Warehse / Lot-13 Templanza St., Don Pedro Vill , Marulas LA-2,540/FA-3,314 -near Savory Rest.	20,232,000
49. Ind'l. Lot w/ 2 Whse.(14 & 16) Barracks, Canteen,Guardhse. Lot-1075-D-1-C, Plastic City # 6 T.Santiago St, Canumay-West. LA-9,923 / FA-7,096	39,703,000
50. Ind'l. Lot w/ Warehouse, # 47 Maysan Rd, (near Maysan Elem. Schl) L.A.-7,871 / F.A.-7,040	40,702,000
51. Ind'l. Lot w/ Bldgs /Lot-382-G Plastic City Housing,Canumay L.A.-25,798 / F.A.-5,310 (via T.Santiago & Pinagbayanan Sts)	51,000,000
TAGUIG - Global City Fort Boni	**MIN BID**
(Infront of Adidas Sports Camp)	
52. Lot-3 Blk -16 / L.A - 1,643	164,300,000
TARLAC CITY	**MIN BID**
Town proper - infront of ice plant	
53. Lot-4-C, Rizal St. / L.A -759	8,093,000
54. Lot-4-B,Rizal cor Panganiban Sts. / L.A.- 1,102	11,752,000
SARIAYA - QUEZON PROV.	**MIN BID**
55. Agri.Lot w/ resi H&L,Whse & Piggery/Lot-6181-A-5-A-1-A-1-I Psd 4A-001202, Bo Sampaloc TLA-101,038.65 / TFA-9,277 (near bridge of Bo Sampaloc)	45,053,000

JUST BRING P20,000(CASH OR MC)SHOW MONEY TO QUALIFY TO BID FOR EACH PROPERTY. CWT IS FOR THE BUYER'S ACCOUNT ALL PROPERTIES FOR SALE ARE ON "AS IS WHERE IS" BASIS. Unionbank may, at anytime, withdraw any of the properties listed above prior to auction.

HOUSE & LOT

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MEADOWS • SUNRISE
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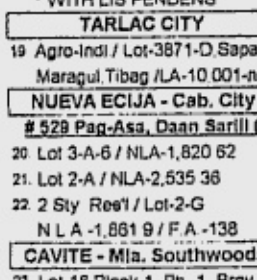
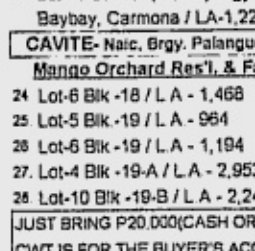


3 BR 2 TB W/BATH TUB & CARPORT



2 BR 2 TB W/CARPORT
CALL:
912-28-74/655-0134
630-6189

HOUSE & LOT

BAGUIO

FOR SALE
QUAINT
BAGUIO COUNTRY HOME
Original pinewood log facade, old pine trees, located within a lot area of 1739 sqm. Two Storey wood/cemented house has 7 bedrooms, 5t&b, phone lines, 2 kitchens with separate servant's quarters & bath, separate caretaker's quarters with bath. Serene garden features playground, gazebo & gym.Contact BPCC Phone Nos. (074)-4434116 (074)-4449800 Cell # 0917-7912150

PARANAQUE

BAYVIEW VILL. PARANAQUE
2-sty LA-553m² P7.97M
MULTINATIONAL VILLAGE
3-sty LA-417m² P7.29M
10%DP Bal 10yrs @ 11% Fxd
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QUEZON CITY

#9 14th St New Mla
1151m² Call Arnold Go
09177494499 or 9532616

Cubao N.Y. Anapolis 9122194

HOUSE & LOT

QUEZON CITY

'80C nr Mindanao Ave'
la413m² fa208m² Narra Int. Door ceiling flooring 4Car Garage walking closet Patio Garden High Fence Bath Tub Maid Rm P9M neg 374-6731' 929-2396 0917-3646725 0919-2434474

Gilmore Ave New Manila 911-0190

RIZAL

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2-4br 2tb Pckgs 1M-Up
20%Down 12mos. to Pay We Give Financial Approval Thru Bank / In-Hse / Pag-Ibig Call 697-1443 • 0917-8504163 www.winninghomesrealty.com

OTHER AREAS

Antipolo Lot=300m² Hse=200m² 4BR 2T&B 1Grge 3.5M •0916-5444401•

BULACAN

GROTTO AREA 225T 9390299

SECURITY BANK
PROPERTY MANAGEMENT DIVISION
9/F SBC Centre, 6776 Ayala Avenue, Makati City
Tel. Nos. 888-7350 to 52; 867-6788 loc. 2921-26
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NO BIDDING!!!	FAST APPROVAL!!! CASH/INSTALLMENTS	BEST DEALS BROKERS ARE WELCOME!!!
WAREHOUSES/FACTORY/ COMMERCIAL BLDG.	*HOUSE AND LOTS/ RESD'L. CONDO. UNITS*	*VACANT RESIDENTIAL/ COMMERCIAL LOTS*
1. Along Cagayan Valley Road, Mayapyap, Cabanatuan City LA: 15,410m²; TFA: 2,340m² ; P50.0 Million	1. 40 Caragay St., San Francisco Del Monte, Quezon City LA: 273m²; FA: 285m²; P3.5 Million	1. Vacant Residential Lots Cottonwood Heights, Bo. San Isidro, Antipolo LA: 274 to 542 m² ; P5,500/m²
2. Along T. Santiago St., Bo. Lingunan, Valenzuela, Metro Manila LA: 39,729m²; TFA: 7,081m²; P155.0 Million	2. 28 Pisces St., Carmel V Subd., Tandang Sora, Quezon City LA: 400m²; FA: 327m²; P7.2 Million	2. Vacant Residential Lots Southlake Subd., Bo. Bukal, near Pansol Calamba, Laguna LA: 240 to 505 m² ; P3,000/m²
3. Lot 1-A, Sto Domingo, Cainta, Rizal LA: 13,174m²; TFA: 7,521.41m² ; P70.0 Million	3. 1 Dahlia cor. White Lily St., Araneta Village, Malabon LA: 786 m²; TFA: 555 m²; P7.0 Million	3. Vacant Commercial Lot Lot 5-A Bradco Ave., Aseana Business Park, Parañaque LA: 6,281m²; P50,000/m²
4. Along El Camino Road, Bo. Perez and Bahay Pare, Meycauayan, Bulacan, LA: 15,000m²; TFA: 8,736m² P97.0 Million	4. 157 Country Drive St., Country Homes, Bo. Soro-soro, Biñan, Laguna LA: 240m²; FA: 210m²; P1.8 Million	4. Vacant Commercial Lot Along Gov. Ferrer Ave., Rosario, Cavite LA: 1,100m²; P15,000/m²
5. 3-storey Building, Along D. Silang St., Poblacion, Batangas City LA: 294m²; FA: 406 m² P8.0Million	5. 8 Ortega St., San Vicente, San Pedro, Laguna LA: 324 m² ; FA: 297 m²; P1.8 Million	5. Residential/Commercial Lots/Fairway Lots EagleRidge Golf & Residential Estate, Amadeo Road, Gen. Trias, Cavite LA: 440 to 1,022 m²; P3,000/m²
*PRICES ARE NEGOTIABLE & SUBJECT TO CHANGE W/O PRIOR NOTICE	*ALL OFFERS (SALE/LEASE) ARE SUBJECT TO MANAGEMENT APPROVAL	* SALE IS ON AS-IS-WHERE-IS BASIS

LOT

MANDALUYONG

LOT

MANDALUYONG

LOT

MANDALUYONG

LOT FOR SALE

Location and Description:

A 4,287 square meter industrial lot located at No. 306 J.P. Rizal Street, Barangay Namayan, Mandaluyong City; rear portion of the property is Pasig River.

For particulars, Please call at
811-5807 up to 14 / Fax No. 811-5815
Ask for Gee / Cirila / Dannie

COMML/RESDL

MAKATI

COMML/RESDL

MAKATI

(1) Office/Residential Condo Unit for Sale (3.1M)

4th & 5th Flrs. w/ Attic,
U-4/5-3 Sunshine Cond.
9633 Kamagong St., SA Village,
Makati City
Floor area of 111.60 square meters
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Mobile No. 09193580236/
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Brokers are Welcome!

HOUSE & LOT

BULACAN

LA38.5 FA22 P-IBIG Down 5T M/A 2,378 09217377851 4563409

Near Grotto 650T 9372688

LAGUNA

BINAN RFO 400T 5201792

METROVILLE SUBD LA 122m² 2bdrms 1T&B FA61.28m² P1.2M Vic 8903461 loc 27

MILAN CAMELLA HOMES 3Stry FA210m² P1.7M VIC 8903461 LOC 27/25

P700T 10% D/P RFO 1st class dev't Calamba 09194539350

CONDO/TWNHSE

MAKATI

MKT NR AYALA
BnewTennse/3stry/3br/2 1/2tb/grge P3.720M up 8903461 loc 34

CONDO/TWNHSE

MAKATI

1.1M C5 Nr The Fort
10T/mo. or 4Yrs No Int. or 10% D.P. LIPAT AGAD 2-4BR 15min Fr Mkti 0917-8313226

RENT2OWN 9T/mo.
Condo nr Mkti 0922-8086855

MANDALUYONG

D. GARDENS RFO 09192189817

PASIG

VVERDE 3BR 1.5M T9124323

QUEZON CITY

★B/new 3BR3TB mds rm 2cgrg 4388754 09228530530 159 Sct. Limbaga Ext

LOT

Occidental Mindoro
100has property in Lawaan, Abra de Ilog, Occ Mindoro nr Puerto Galera w/ beach-front suitable 4 resort/ ranch/agri 4 only
P250,000 per hectare
Call Nick 921-5718

CONDO/TWNHSE

QUEZON CITY

RUSH SALE owner leaving 1 Condo Unit 2BR fully furnished w/parking Panay Ave. QC 2.6M (neg) 0920-9068059

TAGUIG

PACIFIC TWR 23m² Rush! w/income embasy 09189392979

VARIED AREAS

Palm Tower - Makati Central Park - Pasay Residential, Comm'l. &Parkg. Look: Ruby Tel Nos: 8112517 to 19 Thru: Bank / Pag-Ibig

LOT

KALOOCAN

420m² P1.2M BALUBAD ST NOVALICHES 802-2912

Rainbow Village 5 LA 216m² P3,473m² Vic 8903461 loc 25

VILLA ANGELICA LA274m² FA157m² 4br 3tb P1.7M Vic 8903461 loc 27

LOT

PARANAQUE

Southbay Village Sucat
516Sqm Rush 0915-4638899

PASIG

METROVILLE SUBD LA333m²
P4,054/m² Vic 8903461 loc 27

QUEZON CITY

Rd 20 Proj. 8, 1,418m²@ P14T/m²
Cong. Ave Ext. 451m² @ 8.5T/m²
Proj 6 nr SM Nrth 267m²@3.6M
DBO. 0917-8997547 Jona

RIZAL

RICHMOND nr Ortigas Ext
COMML 200m² Ph1 P6T/m²
RESD'L 164m² P5T/m² w/view
RUSH 9338423 / 6356003

OTHER AREAS

TOWN & COUNTRY HILLS LA240m²
P3,125/m² Vic 8903461 loc 27

BATANGAS

RANCHO VISTA SUBD LA613m2
P2,284/m² Vic 8903461 loc 27

BULACAN

SAN MIGUEL BUL 4000m²
P180/m² Vic 8903461 loc 27

CAVITE

DON BOSCO EXEC HTS LA128m2
P2,900/m2 Vic 8903461 loc 27

MEADOWOOD EXEC VILL
LA 220m² P1.2M neg call MERZ 7785470 / 0917-8409951

PARKPLACE SUBD LA149.30m²
P6,028/m² Vic 8903461 loc 27

PARKPLACE SUBD LA120m²
P5,750/m² Vic 8903461 loc 27

ST. CHARBEL DASMA nr SM
371m² P2,650/m² Vic 8903461 loc 27

CAMELLA HOMES BACOOR
LA137m² FA198.90m² 5br
P1.7M Vic 8903461 loc 27

LAGUNA

SOUTH PEAK P5,000/m2 LA240m2
Vic 8903461 loc 25/27

FARM/FISHPEN/ RAWLANDS

SAN MIGUEL BUL 4000m²
P180/m² Vic 8903461 loc 27

VARIED AREAS

LPL Manor Salcedo Vill
40 sqm P2.8M negotiable
CTland 8 studio P1.2M
Bonaventure 65sqm P3M
Las Piñas 2sty w/ warehse
P3.6M neg'ble 8509507

REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

HOUSE

LAS PINAS

BFRV 2br 10K Util Gardn
Grge 09209507332 • 8739969

MANILA

PANDACAN NR CALTEX 15T ;2TB; 2GRGE CALL 046-5735520

PARANAQUE

MARIMAR New 3BR 2TB Grg nr Skyway SM Bic 823-2885

BATANGAS

Vacation House
Batangas Seacoast P20,000/mo. Call Adams 0917-85149003 (043)-9312410 email: nona_adams@yahoo.com

CONDO/TWNHSE

MAKATI

MAKATI CONDO OFC
RENTSALE 09189392979

Studio Makati P8,500
Call or Txt Nona 09178514903
•(043) 9312410

CONDO/TWNHSE

QUEZON CITY

COML/RES 57 ROCES 3723112

WAREHOUSE/ FACTORY

Cubao fabshp 600m² 7257342

ROOM & BOARD

Chin Gen Area 7836781

•FURNISH PASAY 8872865•

P200/ Sucat Pque 8276345

BEDSPACE

Mkti nr Ayala P1T Ldy 7257342

BUSINESS RENTAL

MAKATI nr BUENDIA
PTAMO 62/148/185/M² 1st class 8903461 loc 34 or 19 a/c hrs

Nr Trabajo Mrkt Samp. Mla
0917-8906317 • 749-7119

Dental Clinic For Sale/Lease
Rm224 Atrium Bldg Makati
•811-4071/823-6047•

LOAN & MORTGAGE

2% W/O TAKING CAR 3677523/24

FINANCING-EASY FAST VERY PRIVATE CONVENIENT H/L BUSINESS PERSONAL Gigie Ernie 8903461 loc 25/23

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE OR RENT

COMMERCIAL/ RESIDENTIAL

LEASING
136 Katipunan,
St. Ignatius, Q.C.
1. Banks
2. Drug Store
3. Convenience Store
4. Parlor/Spa/Massage
5. Fastfood Restaurant
6. Boutique/Residential
7. Wine Store
8. Computer/Liquor Store
437-1274 • 9132314
0920-2685564

OTHER REAL ESTATE

REALTORS/SEMINAR

BROKERS CEP 4382966

TRANSPORTATION FOR SALE

CARS

BMW

'99 MB100 P300T 360-9523

HYUNDAI

'96 GRACE P195T 360-9523

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK-JAPAN SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

(funded by the Government of Japan)

Qualified citizens of developing member countries of the Asian Development Bank, who intend to pursue post-graduate studies in economics, management, science and technology, and other development-related fields are invited to apply for scholarships under the Asian Development Bank-Japan Scholarship Program. It is anticipated that upon successful completion of their graduate studies under the Program, the scholars should return to their countries and contribute to its socio-economic development. Scholarships are awarded for graduate studies at designated institutions in courses of study approved by ADB. The Program especially welcomes women applicants who are qualified but have limited financial means to obtain university education.

THE SCHOLARSHIPS: LEVEL OF EDUCATION: Post-graduate (Diploma, Masters and Doctorate degrees); **DURATION:** From one to two years; **COVERAGE:** Tuition fees, books, subsistence and housing allowance, insurance, economy airfare, and research subsidy

ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS:

1. AUSTRALIA—NATIONAL CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES / AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY .
2. CHINA,PEOPLE'S REPULIC OF—UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG .
3. INDIA—INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, DELHI .
4. JAPAN—INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF JAPAN, NAGOYA UNIVERSITY (Graduate School of International Development), KEIO UNIVERSITY (International Graduate Programs on Advanced Science and Technology), NATIONAL GRADUATE INSTITUTE FOR POLICY STUDIES, RITSUMEIKAN UNIVERSITY (Master in Economics), SAITAMA UNIVERSITY (Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering), UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO (Department of Civil Engineering, School of International Health, Institute of Environmental Studies, and Department of Urban Engineering).
4. NEW ZEALAND—UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND.
5. PAKISTAN—LAHORE UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES.
6. PHILIPPINES—ASIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT, INTERNATIONAL RICE RESEARCH INSTITUTE / UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES IN LOS BAÑOS.
7. SINGAPORE—NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE.
8. THAILAND—ASIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY.
9. USA—EAST-WEST CENTER.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS: Prospective applicants must: be a citizen of an ADB developing member country, be proficient in oral and written English communication skills to be able to pursue studies, have at least two years work experience, have gained admission to an approved course in a designated institution, be in good health, not more than 35 years old at the time of application. (Staff of ADB and the designated institutions and their close relatives are not eligible to apply).

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS: Applicants should: obtain application forms from the designated institutions of their choice; submit the completed application form and required documentation to the Institution, indicate on the application form that the applicant wishes to be considered for an Asian Development Bank-Japan Scholarship. (From among those admitted by the institutions, ADB will select candidates for award of scholarships. A separate application to ADB is not necessary).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT THE ADB-JSP website: http://www.adb.org/jsp

Republic of the Philippines
HOME GUARANTY CORPORATION

INVITATION TO RE-BID

The Home Guaranty Corporation (HGC) is inviting all interested parties to participate in the re-bidding of the long-term lease for the property described below pursuant to the decision of the HGC Board of Directors to re-bid the same:

PROJECT	:	VILLONGCO AREA NATIONAL GOVERNMENT CENTER – COMMONWEALTH ENTERPRISE ZONE PROJECT
LOCATION	:	COMMONWEALTH AVENUE, QUEZON CITY
AREA	:	8,222 SQ.M.
MINIMUM BID PRICE	:	P80.00 per sq.m. per month
LEASE PERIOD	:	25 years

The schedule of bidding activities is as follows:

Issuance of bid documents including eligibility requirements	January 10, 2005
Pre-bid conference	January 17, 2005
Start of submission of eligibility requirements	January 24, 2005
Deadline of submission of eligibility documents and opening of eligibility documents (Pass/Fail Criteria)	February 7, 2005
Issuance of notice of eligibility	February 10, 2005
Deadline for submission of bids and opening of bids	March 10, 2005

The bidder is advised to inspect the subject property to determine its actual condition. Particulars of the bidding may be obtained from the Secretariat, Asset Disposal Committee-Villongco Area, NGC-CEZP at the 4th Floor, JADE Building, 335 Sen. Gil J. Puyat Avenue, Makati City. Other inquiries relative to the bidding may be made at tel. nos. 897-32-90/897-32-86.

Bid documents shall be available to interested bidders starting January 10, 2005 upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P20,000.00. Eligibility requirements should be submitted in a sealed envelope to the Secretariat, Asset Disposal Committee- Villongco Area, NGC-CEZP on or before February 7, 2005. The opening of the eligibility envelopes will be held on February 7, 2005 at 10:00 A.M., the last day of the submission of eligibility documents.

Sealed bids should be submitted to the Secretariat, Asset Disposal Committee - Villongco Area, NGC-CEZP on or before 10:00 A.M., March 10, 2005, at the 4th Floor, JADE Building, 335 Sen. Gil J. Puyat Avenue, Makati City.

The sealed bid should be accompanied by a bid bond equivalent to 10% of one year rental in the form of cash or certified manager's/cashier's check payable to HGC.

THE HGC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL OFFERS; TO WAIVE ANY DEFECTS OR TO ACCEPT SUCH OFFER AS MAY BE CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE CORPORATION.

(Sgd.) **ARTHUR G. TAN**
Chairman
Asset Disposal Committee
Villongco Area, NGC-CEZP

(PDI - Dec. 19 & 26, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
Professional Regulation Commission
Manila

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Professional Regulation Commission, with address at P. Paredes cor. N. Reyes sts. (formerly Morayta st.), Sampaloc, Manila, hereby invites interested bidders to apply for:

Items to Bid for 2004 requirements	Approved Budget for the Contract	Date/Venue of Pre-bid Conference	Non-Refundable Fee
Printing and Supply of Professional Identification Cards (PRC ID Cards) (6 Months)	**P 7,500,000.00** Not less than 250,000 pcs. (Supply for 6 Months) at P30.00 per card	January 7, 2005 at 10:00 a.m. PRC Conference Rm. 2nd Floor, Main Bldg.	P 1,000.00
Printing and Supply of Computerized Application Forms (CAFs)	**P 313,600.00** Not less than 180,229 pcs. At P1.74 per sheet of Bookpaper	January 7, 2005 at 2:00 p.m. PRC Conference Rm. 2nd Floor, Main Bldg.	P 1,000.00
Printing and Supply of OMR ID/Answer Sheets	**P 3,644,200.00** Not less than 1,370,000 pcs. at P2.66 per sheet of OCR paper	January 10, 2005 10:00 a.m. PRC Conference Rm. 2nd Floor, Main Bldg.	P 1,000.00

Only bidders registered with the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) for procurement of goods shall be allowed to participate in the bidding process. Bidders may obtain the list of the registration requirements for procurement of goods at the Office of the BAC Chairperson, Commissioner Leonor Tripon-Rosero, 2nd floor, PRC Main Bldg., starting on **December 20, 2004**. Deadline for submission of registration requirements shall be at 5:00 p.m. on **January 3, 2005**. Issuance of Certification of registration to bidders for procurement of goods shall be on **January 10, 2005**.

Bid forms and the Terms of Reference (TOR) may be obtained by interested bidders starting on **December 20, 2004** from the Office of the BAC Chairperson with a non-refundable fee of P1,000.00.

All particulars relative to the registration, eligibility, bidding, evaluation of bids, and awards of contract shall be governed by the applicable provisions of Republic Act No. 9184, otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act (GRPA), and its implementing rules and regulations.

The Commission reserves the right to reject any and all bids, declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract if there is a prima facie evidence of collusion between the officials or employees of the Commission and/or between the BAC and any of the bidders, or if the collusion is between or among the bidders themselves, or between a bidder and a third party, including any act which restricts, suppresses or nullifies or tends to restrict, suppress or nullify competition; if the BAC is found to have failed in following the prescribed bidding procedures; or for any justifiable and reasonable ground where the award of the contract will not redound to the benefit of the Government.

Very truly yours,

(Sgd.) **ALCESTIS M. GUIANG**
Chairperson

(PDI-Dec. 19 & 26, 2004)

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ADRC's Mediation on 'Iyo ang Katarungan'

Justice Pres Velasco Jr.
Court Administrator, Supreme Court

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In Memory of

Rosa Blanca Jimenez-Roca

who joined her Creator on 17 December 2004
at St. Francis Medical Center, Lynwood, Ca., USA

She will be lovingly remembered by her husband, **ERNESTO**, and children **Preciosa Blanca**, **Celeste Blanca**, **Melinda Blanca** and **Gerardo Ernesto**, together with their spouses and children.

Her remains lie in state at the Loyola Memorial Chapel, Guadalupe, Makati City.
Interment is on 29 December 2004 at the Jimenez-Roca Mausoleum, Manila North Cemetery.

ENGR. SANTIAGO H. ROA

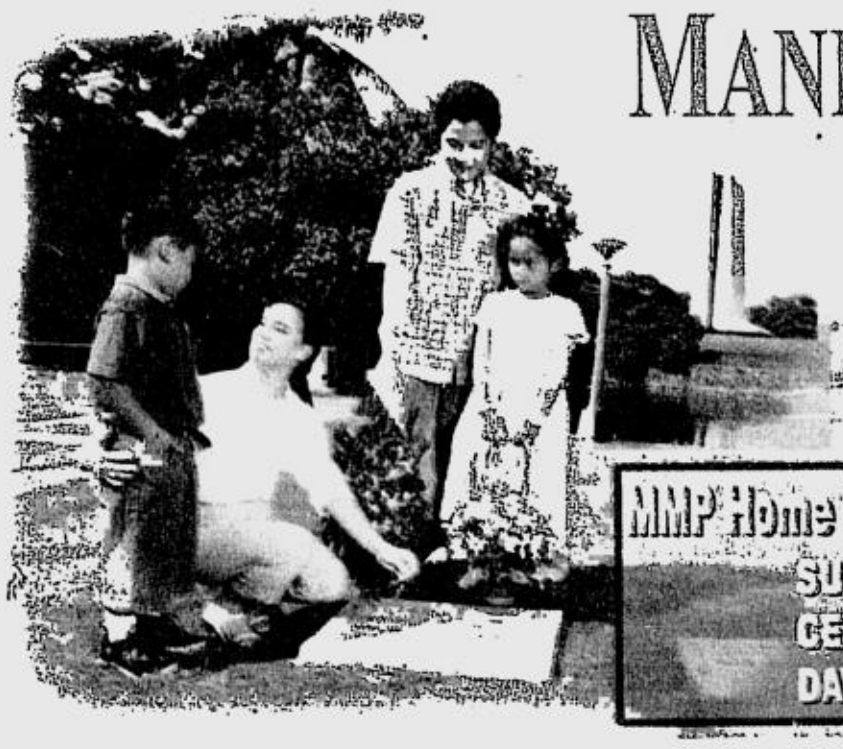
(July 25, 1925 to Dec. 14, 2004)

His bereaved children: **DRA. EVELYN ROA-IGNACIO, JANE ANDOQUE, BRENDA PADUA, VIVIAN MALUBAY, GERARDO ROA, ATTY. JOY ROA, GILDA BERNARDINO, JOSEPH ROA, JOSEPHINE ROA** and **EMMANUEL ROA**, and other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

He is survived by his wife **JOCELYN LOPEZ-ROA** and his brothers **PETRONIO ROA** and **PAULINO ROA**.

His remains lie in state at the St. Joseph Chapel, Holy Trinity Memorial Chapels, Dr. A. Santos St., Sucat, Parañaque City.

Interment will be on December 30, 2004, Thursday 9:00am at the Manila Memorial Park, Dr. A. Santos St., Sucat, Parañaque City.



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Psalm 19:14

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all their joys of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever... **Psalms 41:13**

We, the family of beloved

TAN POK HUI

(Tan Book Tong / So King Hui)
(April 30, 1928 – December 6, 2004)

wish to express our profound gratitude for your spontaneous love, sympathy and support in his passing on December 6, 2004.

We find strength and are humbly grateful to you all in knowing that he touched so many lives in his concern for others. He will continue to live in our hearts and through the lives we lead as testament to his legacy of love.

Thank you very much.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

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How Christmas cards revive our forests

By Rowena C. Burgos

BECAUSE of creative ways to keep the donations coming, nonprofit foundations have kept their advocacies, especially now when corporations are tightfisted, government funding is scarce and donors suffer from fatigue.

For a nonprofit corporate-led foundation such as the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), hard times call for enterprise and creativity. "It was in this light that the foundation implemented the Christmas Card Fund Campaign in 1991 to raise funds for the reforestation of Cebu Hilly-

HOW/ C2

Lifestyle salutes the PBSP's project that raises funds for the greening of cities by printing and selling student-designed Yuletide cards

CHRISTMAS card designed by Mylene Stephanie J. Lacson, La Consolacion College (Bacolod)

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SEA Princess says hello to Kitty

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CANDID couples

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THE BOHEMIAN look is back

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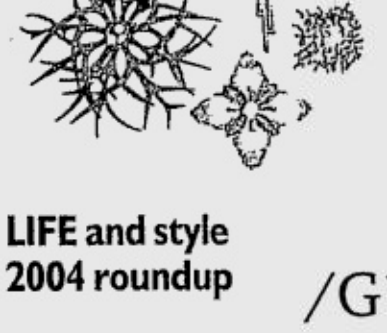
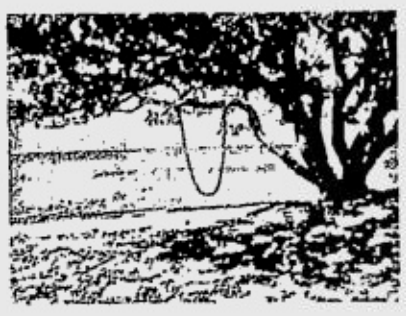


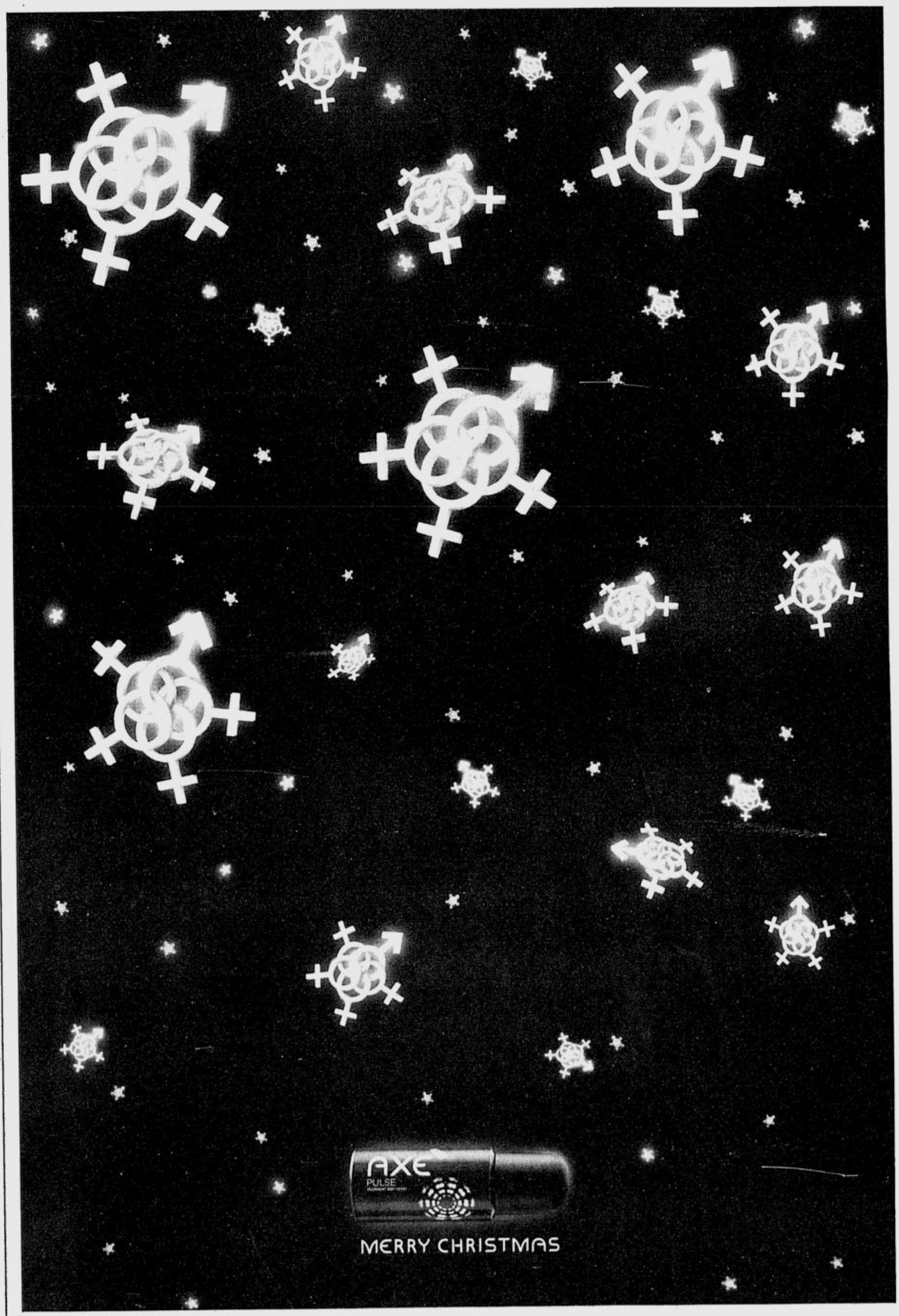
LIFE and style 2004 roundup

/G1



UP and down the sandbox

/H1



LARISSA M. del Cano, La Consolacion College (Bacolod)

MARK Michael E. Curativo, La Consolacion College (Bacolod)

How Christmas cards revive our forests

From page C1

land and Bago Upland in the Visayas," says Ruth Honculada, PBSP chief of corporate communications.

To date, PBSP has generated more than P1 million by selling Christmas cards. The income has financed the planting of approximately 150,000 trees of different species and the reforestation of about 60 hectares of land.

The project won the 2001 Anvil Award of Merit by the Public Relations Society of the Phils. This is all part of the PBSP's Cebu Manange Watershed Management Program, which, aside from reforestation, provides marginal upland farmers with farm productivity techniques and enterprise development training.

Christmas card

Every year, PBSP conducts a design-a-Christmas card contest among college students in Cebu and Bacolod. The winning designs are used as Christmas card covers.

Each card is 15.25 cm x 22.25 cm when spread. The PBSP logo, name and description of the foundation, and the identity of the artist are printed at the back. Each card costs P20 and every recipient of the card will have a tree planted in his name in PBSP's reforestation sites in the Visayas.

There are also card designs and customized texts for companies interested to have their exclusive Christmas cards. A company can buy a design for P10,000 and own the artwork originally submitted by the participating student. In addition, 500 trees will be planted in the purchasing company's name.

This year, the four winning designs were by Rowena Dablo, University of Cebu; and Mariel Joy de la Serna, Jay-R Delleva and Emil de la Cruz, all students of La Consolacion College in Bacolod. Other designs were done by Ivan Richard Deligero of the San Carlos Seminary College; Ma. Theresa de la Cruz, Jazheila Magbanua, Mark Michael Curativo, Mylene Stephanie Lacson, Jennelyn Magbanua, Hershey Limbo, Kristone John Bayoneta, Larissa del Cano and Brian Josue Rene Lomugdang, all of La Consolacion College in Bacolod; Jayboy Aterrado and Wesley Akeem Espina, University of the Philippines Cebu College; Mitchelle Bucong, University of San Carlos; Jenefer Beloy, Cebu State College of Science and Technology; and Neil Gabriel Esgara, Cebu Institute of Technology.

These students were awarded cash prizes.

"This ongoing program hopes to increase the density of trees located in PBSP reforestation sites of Cebu Hillyland and Bago Upland in Negros Occidental," Honculada says.

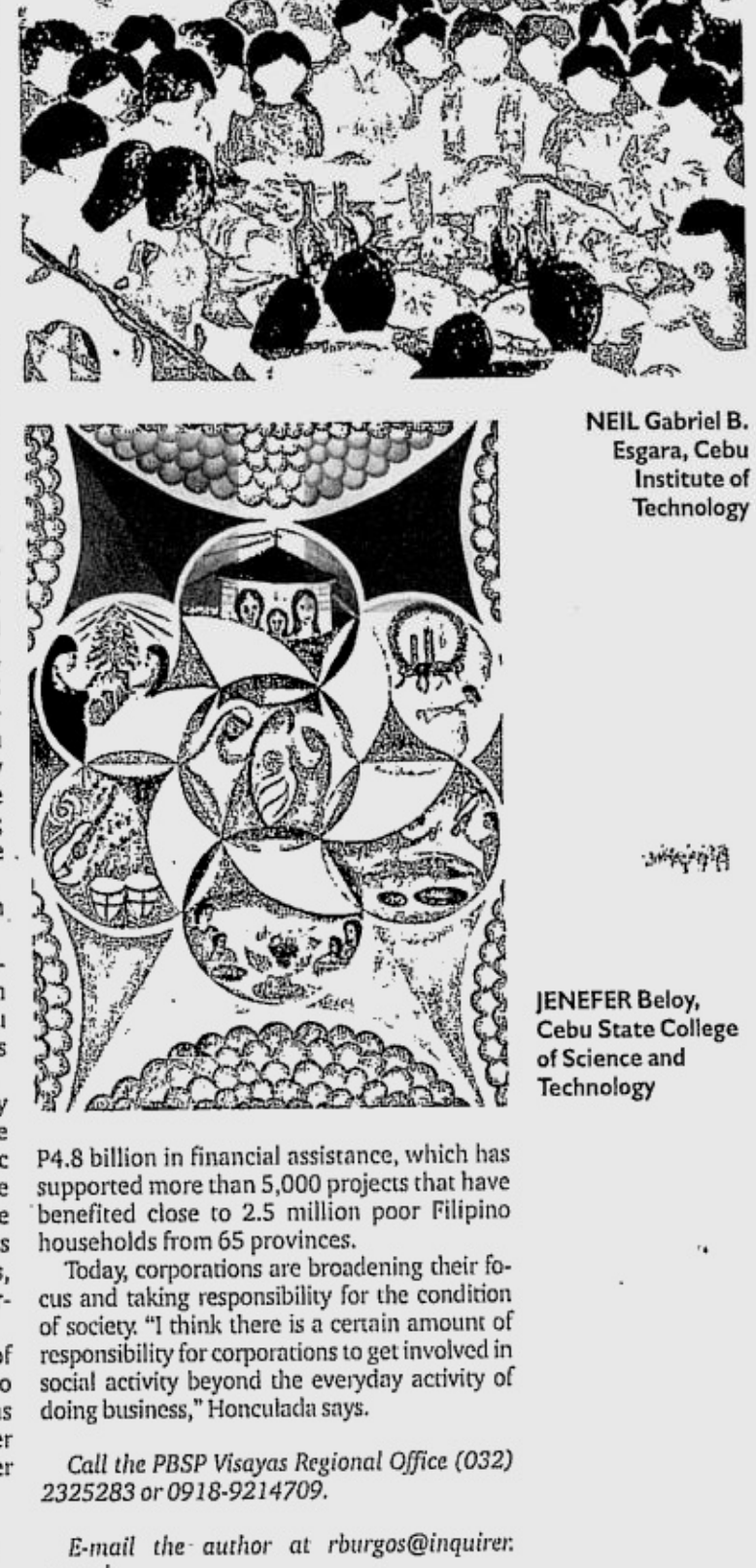
PBSP was organized in 1970 by socially responsible business people as a response to the socioeconomic crises. The foundation has since been the corporate sector's vehicle in delivering assistance to landless farmers, fisherfolk, rural workers, urban poor and indigenous cultural communities.

From an initial membership of 50 companies, PBSP has grown to more than 170 members. It has worked with some 2,900 partner organizations, and provided over P4.8 billion in financial assistance, which has supported more than 5,000 projects that have benefited close to 2.5 million poor Filipino households from 65 provinces.

Today, corporations are broadening their focus and taking responsibility for the condition of society. "I think there is a certain amount of responsibility for corporations to get involved in social activity beyond the everyday activity of doing business," Honculada says.

Call the PBSP Visayas Regional Office (032) 2325283 or 0918-9214709.

E-mail the author at rburgos@inquirer.com.ph



NEIL Gabriel B. Esgara, Cebu Institute of Technology

JENEFER Beloy, Cebu State College of Science and Technology

Bikers' run for toys

SOME 350 kids from the Laura Vicuna Foundation, the Visayan Forum and the Open Heart Foundation got a special treat recently from members of the Motorcycle Advocates of the Philippines (MAP).

The bikers organized a run to collect toys, as well as clothes, for the children who came from homes assisted by the United Nations Children's Fund.

Ned Hourani, MAP ex-president and president of the Freedom Riders Motorcycle Club, organized the event.

Motorcyclists from various clubs assembled at the Ateneo Car Park and gave the kids a ride on their bikes, to the Rockwell Club tent.

Entrance fee was a toy. Some 700 toys and 300 pieces of clothing were collected.

The 250 or so motorcyclists brought friends and families to the event.

The party at the tent featured clowns, party booths, ice cream from Nestlé, candies from Candy Corner, games; shows and surprises.

FUN, food and games for the kids and their families

ADVENTURERS Motorcycle Club

SANTA gives the kids a ride on the motorcycle.

THE CHILDREN of Asilo de San Vicente de Paul with Santa Claus and the CPH family

PHOTOS BY RUDY ESPERAS

CPH general manager Paul Gill hands out gifts to the kids.

Early Christmas treat for orphans

THE CENTURY Park Hotel (CPH), together with Nestle Food Services and Nestle Ice Cream, spread holiday cheers recently to the orphans of Asilo de San Vicente de Paul at the hotel's ballroom.

The Thanksgiving Party was spearheaded by Century Park Hotel general manager Paul Gill.

Communications and media manager Toti Palileo and sales managers Andy Hipolito and Ferdie de Leon brought the orphans to the hotel on buses of Morning Star and Oversea Central.

On hand to welcome kids were PR manager Steve Naguiat and Nestle Philippines executives.

The children immediately had their photographs taken with Santa Claus who came all the way from Finland. They then enjoyed their *merienda* of spaghetti, barbecue, chicken lollipops, mini burgers and iced tea.

Gill handed out the gift packs with the help of Santa Claus. The packs contained Nestle products like candies, cookies, cereals and noodles; and toys from Century Park.

Asilo's Sister Melly gave a short thank-you speech and the children performed song and dance numbers during the program.

Also assisting during the event were CPH marketing director Angel Suntay, beverage manager Ricky Chavez and other executives and employees.

SANTA Claus from Finland and some of the children of Asilo

GRACE and Rosa render a song number.

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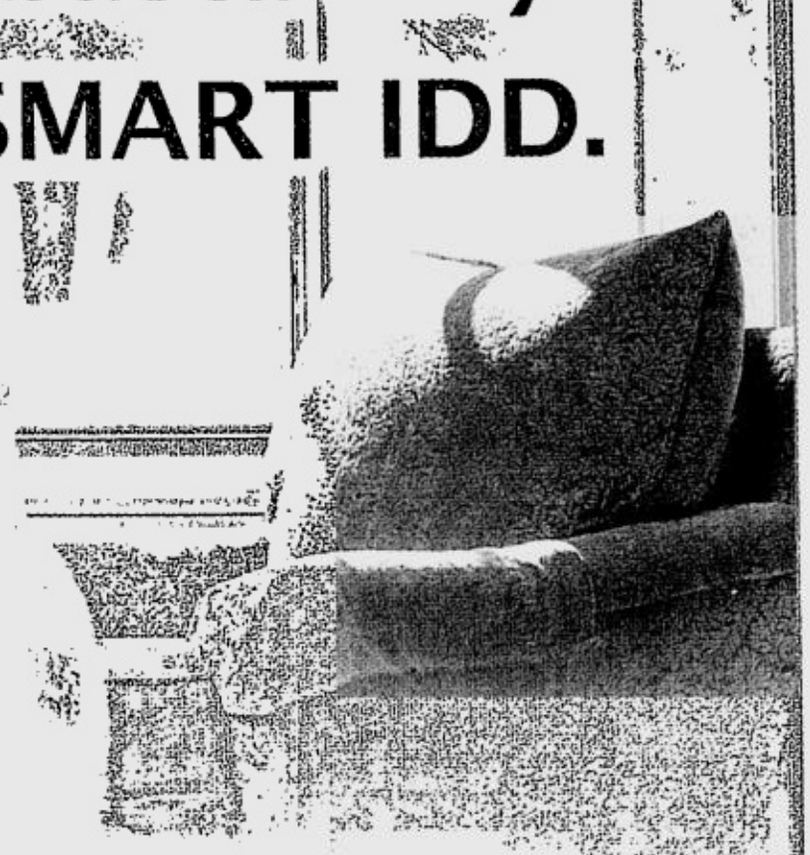

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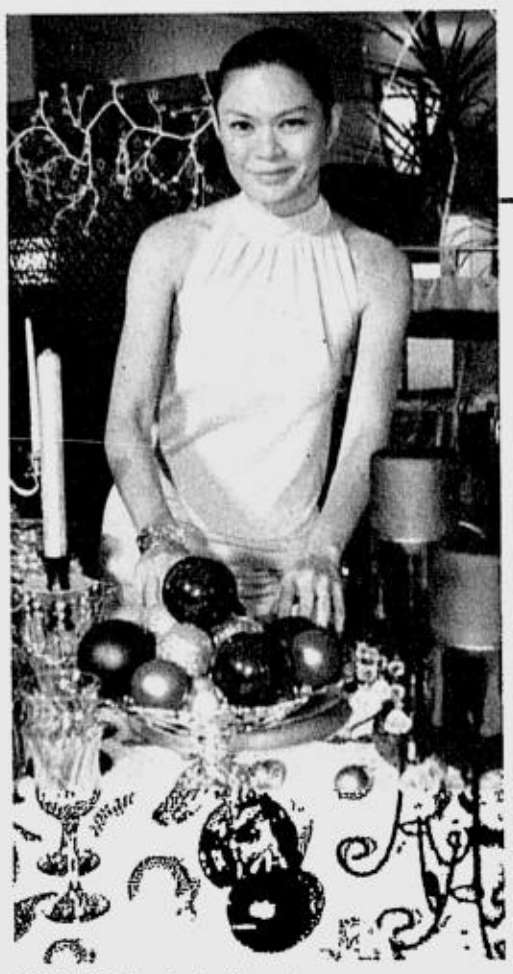


APPLES Aberin-Sadhwani

ANNA Rocha-Castillo with her niece Misha Bernardino, one of the inspirations for the design

AGOT Isidro's holiday setting design was presented by her husband, Manu Sandejas.

A hassle-free but elegant table setting

THE ALABANG Town Center held a two-week Holiday Table Setting Exhibit to give helpful tips to prospective hosts and hostesses.

The Home Zone area became a colorful showcase of table settings for Noche Buena by Ayen Munji-Laurel, Ana Rocha-Castillo, Apples Aberin-Sadhwani and Agot Isidro-Sandejas.

Munji-Laurel gave a glimpse of Christmas Eve in the Laurel home through her classic and opulent setting. She used furniture and accessories mainly from Georgian Lane, Play & Display, Area Home Store, Home & Beyond, and Rustan's. Her place settings featured a profusion of vibrant red tones.

Singer and television host Isidro-Sandejas opted for a minimalist approach. Her clean and uncluttered design used items from Store One, Cereo, Dimensione, Play & Display, and Area Home Store.

Architect and interior designer Rocha-Castillo had children in mind in her setting. She combined expensive crystal from Rustan's, furniture from Play & Display, Shell Canvass, and Store One, with affordable finds from True Value, for a whimsical setting dedicated "to the child in all of us."

Model and INQUIRER columnist Aberin-Sadhwani gathered vintage and modern pieces from Jo-Liza, Silahis Arts, Herencia, Home Essence and Play & Display to create a shabby-chic-inspired Christmas setting with a fun and feminine edge. A student of the Philippine School of Interior Design (PSID), she used purple and pink tones to create a relaxed yet elegant look.

The exhibit displayed the diverse tastes and distinct styles of the four designers.

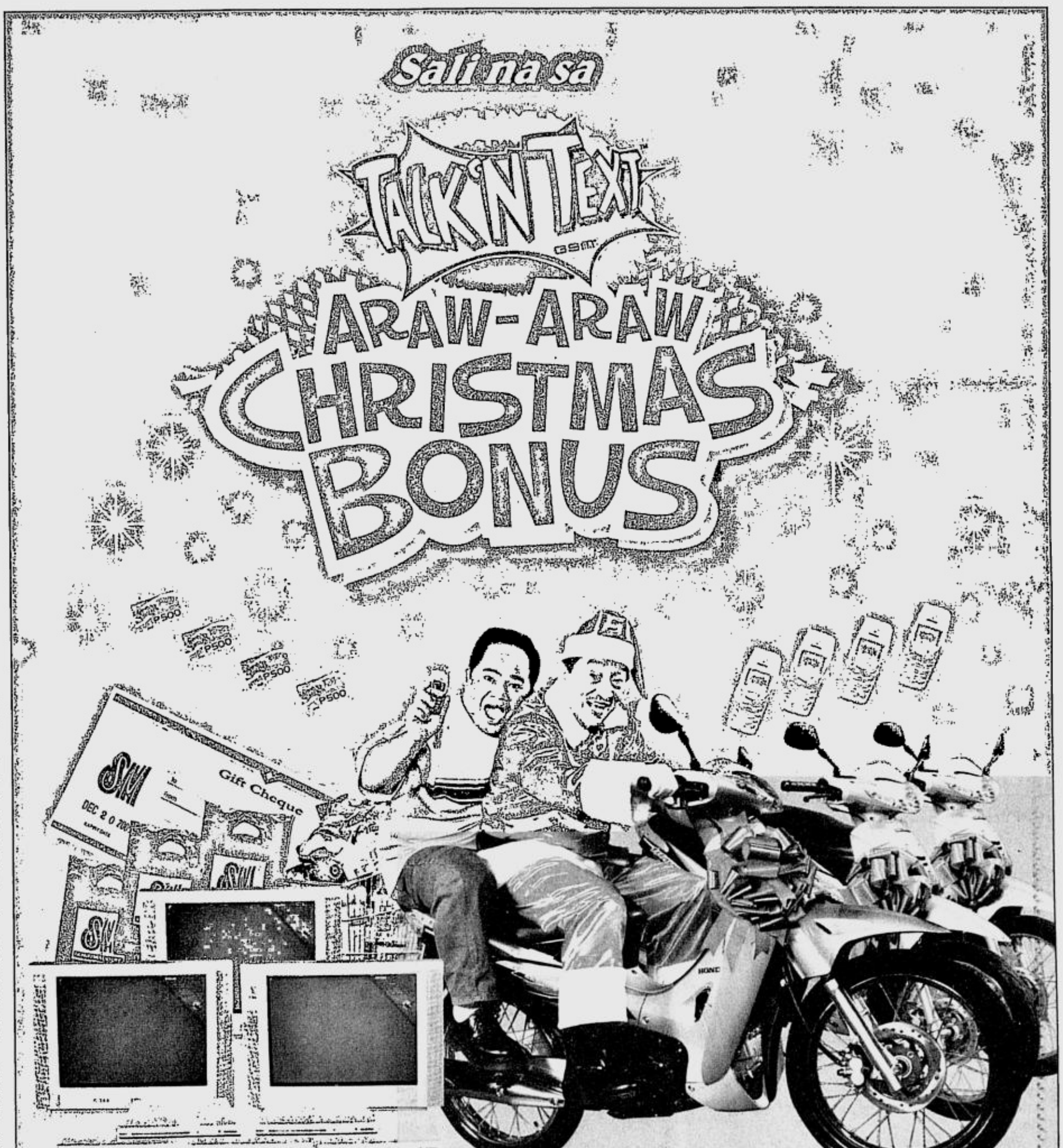
Other stores that provided decorative pieces for the exhibition were Balikbayan Handicrafts, Blims Furniture, Dwellings, Infinite Walls, Make Room, Quintessence Gallery, Richwei Gift Collection, Robles Heritage, Tesoro's, The Flower Farm, and Zwilling J.A. Henkels.

MARICRIS Bernardino, ATC division manager

JAVI Hernandez, ATC general manager

AYEN Munji-Laurel

Sali na sa
TALK 'N TEXT
ARAW-ARAW CHRISTMAS BONUS



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HAPPY couple Irene and Randy Francisco

Kitty and I

TESSA!

Tessa Prieto-Valdes

WHEN it comes to event launches, I normally arrive in the nick of time. At the Hello Kitty One-of-a Kind Museum, I donned my new Swatch in support of Gift Gate queen Virgie Ramos and appeared just in time to introduce the guests of honor with my co-host, INQUIRER Super's Tim Yap, all bubbly in a pink jumpsuit.

Over a thousand entries of the Kitty T-shirt contest were displayed in revolving mechanisms and the winning entries were modeled by reed-thin, teeny-bopper models—the sort that made me feel old and fat, though of course still cheery in my hot pink outfit. Pinoy creativity took center stage in the Kitty room of happiness, all filled with different designs. It really is a must-see on the ground floor of Glorietta 2 between Guess and Replay.

I was interviewed by a kid's feature show of GMA 7, called "Lovely Day," on why I have this fascination over Hello Kitty considering I may not even call myself a young adult anymore. Initially, I was into Kitty because of my six-year-old, Kitty-crazed daughter Annika, but I realized Kitty is more than a toy or accessory because of the happy spirit her items have from the handbags to the tiaras and everything else in between. And if we can spread cheer in any small way to anyone, it truly is a wonderful feeling.

CEO at play. Manny Pangilinan with Gift Gate's Virgie Ramos

Ottoman empire splendor relived

CEBU CEBU

Jaime Picornell

THE CEBU chapter of La Chaine des Rotisseurs marked its 11th anniversary with a formal dinner at the Rosal ballroom of the Shangri-La Mactan Island Resort. The theme took 72 guests on a journey back in time to the ottoman empire in all its splendor.

Plans for the transformation of the ballroom was shrouded in oriental mystery. Florist Pinky Chang and the resort's top PR people, Neil Rumbaoa and Jaja Chiongbian, came up with a scene worthy of the most opulent seraglio at Topkapi.

Lanterns of opalescent raw silk cast soft lights on tables covered with shimmering brocades of all colors. Fine crystal, china and silver added sparkle. So did piles of cushions in gold lamé strewn over rich Persian carpets.

All tables had centerpieces overflowing with fragrant roses and lilies, clusters of vegetables, sprays of brilliant crystal beads, and bunches of grapes and tiny radishes that came in handy between courses.

Sultana rules

Amid a crowd of lovely ladies in clinging gowns and ablaze with jewels, and men either in tux or elaborate barongs, weaved Madame la Baili of the Cebu chapter, Amparito Lhuillier, a veritable sultana in gold-spangled gossamer. Beside her at all times was husband Michel Lhuillier, who presides over L'Ordre Mondial des Gourmets Degustateurs, a complementary organization to La Chaine.

Fred Frank Fricke, president of the Philippine Bailage of La Chaine, arrived from Manila. Even before he tasted a morsel of the delectable menu prepared, which he carefully perused, he announced, "You have put Cebu on the gastronomic map of the world."

Full attendance

In her words of welcome, Amparito noted the hundred percent attendance of the chapter officers—chef Dietmar Dietrich, Dr. Julian Divinagracia, Al Evangelio, Teresing Mendezona and Dr. Nestor Alonso.

The Mactan Shangri-La's general manager Tim Wright and his wife, Mona, sat at the presidential table together with Michel and Amparito, Mr. Fricke, Jesus and Rosebud Sala, Michael and Rose Hennessy.

The resort's resident manager Daniele Vastolo and his wife, Serine, sat with their best friends, Michael and Joanna Lhuillier, and one of the most beautiful women in Cebu—Iris Fernan Arcenas.

Our table had its share of luminaries belonging to some of Cebu's oldest and most prominent families—Margie Lhuillier, Myra Gonzalez y Osmeña, Quennie Malingin Aman, Chona Bernad, Dr. Lydia Aznar Alfonso, and Julita Urbina, escorted by Dr. Ricardo Urbina.

Mayen Tan, who was the first Baili of the Cebu chapter, was present, seated with Al E, Kenneth and Rachel Lim, Tita Trillo who came from Manila for this, Debbie Enriquez, Marina Codina, Peter and Hermie Cullen.

Martin Kleager came from Hong Kong, where he is connected with the Union Bank of Switzerland. Among those at his table were Vivina Chiu Yrastorza, Cebu City Councilor Jack Jakosalem and his wife, Sharon, Tony and Grace Lozada, Bess Ortiz and Ramon Makilan who was back with City Sports Club after a stint abroad.

Also from Hong Kong was Mariquita Salimbangon Yeung, but Carlos couldn't make it. Benjie Diola pinch-hit for him. They had quite an animated table, what with Teresing M, Dr. Divinagracia, Ann Paulin, Tessie Javier, Stella Bernabe, Dave and Joy Sharpe there.

Romantic couple

Mila Demecillo asked Mariter Dumon Klepp to the party, and she looked terrific. She would be inducted as a new member in February. Most romantic couple of the evening was undoubtedly the Marriott Hotel's general manager Karl Hudson and statuesque Rose Amores.

One couldn't help telling Tim Wright this event had had the best pre-dinner reception. Moet & Chandon champagne flowed

CHONA Bernad, Cecilia Rodriguez, Myra Gonzalez and Maria Codina

AMPARITO and Michel Lhuillier with Teresing Mendezona

Middle Eastern music played all night. It intensified when a sinuous belly dancer with tulle veils appeared. Would anyone care to dance? She beckoned with graceful hands. Michel L readily accepted.

Cigars, liqueurs, and chocolate bonbons were served. That was a sign for everyone to get up, mingle, and get persuaded by the exotic sounds to try a bit of dancing till way way past midnight.

like it was going out of style. (It's usually some ghastly sparkling fizz that you got.)

Executive chef Adam Rozmaryniewics was congratulated for the excellent food, a culinary travelogue of lands once ruled from the Sublime Forte in Istanbul. The scallops for starters were a la Constantinople; the baked garoupa, Armenia; the green pea and mint soup with quail Erzurum; the mangosteen sorbet flavored with rose, Kastamanou. Where's that?

Main dish was lamb loin cooked the way they did it in Anatolia, which was a bit rare. Were we in Angora when desserts came? From wherever they might have come, they were delicious—baclava, marinated figs, and pistachio ice cream.

Start 'em young

By Serapion S. Metilla
Contributor

GOOD gardeners are not only born, but also made. It is important that, at a young age, children are exposed to plants and flowers.

GREEN TIPS

Don't underestimate children. They can be good gardeners if they are well-guided, encouraged and motivated. In most cases, when father and mother are passionate about vegetable patches, trees and other plants, their children eventually become good gardeners.

Children actually just love to play with soil and do gardening. Their interest has to be carefully cultivated, just like plants. It is advisable to give them an area where they can practice growing vegetables and ornamentals, especially flowering plants. Praise them for their efforts and give them incentives. Let them understand and realize the benefits of growing flowers and vegetables.

There are many ways to introduce children to gardening. You can start by making a window box or planter. Better yet give them a small space in the garden. Provide them with the necessary tools, equipment and other needs. Let them choose what to plant—vegetables, ornamentals, cacti and other succulents or herbs are just some of their options.

See to it that the area chosen for a kid's garden gets sunlight and has readily available water supply. It is also advisable to teach them the principles of soil preparation and the importance of composting.

Teach them the right mixture for composting, such as this formula: one part garden soil, one part river sand and two parts compost. Teach them how to use kitchen waste and other recyclable materials like dried leaves, hedge clippings and the like.

Never allow the children to use chemical pesticides. Show them the advantage of a porous mixture and let them understand sufficient drainage to prevent waterlogging.

Teach them correct distances or spacing between plants. Encourage eco-friendly gardening techniques and the use of organic fertilizer. Let them understand the bad effects of pollution.

Select seeds or seedlings that grow and flower fast, like petunias, Vinca rosea, marigolds, *celosia*, *cutsarita*, *gabi-gabihan*, *santan*, and vegetables, among others, for kids to practice on.

Bring your children to the Ecology Learning Center in Quezon Memorial Circle, QC. Foundation president Charito Planas says the center aims to show urban residents what they can do for food security and a green environment.

Planas and the center's employees are willing to give free lectures on organic, vermiculture (earthworm propagation) and the wise use of tight-space garden planters. They also demonstrate recycling of trash, mushroom growing, composting, medicinal herb gardening and backyard fishpond management, among others.

Contact the author at 9394593.

ILLUSTRATION BY ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

UPLB: Makiling's caregiver

SEEING GREEN

Doris Gaskell Nuyda

AFTER we mentioned conservation efforts at the La Mesa Watershed, we got word from the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) that there were also watersheds within the Makiling range that we should not miss.

Our visit to a place only 64 km away from Manila took us on a leisurely stroll along paths lined with lush shrubs, vines, trees and more trees. As we walked, we often had to leap over cracked pavements where roots had broken through.

What a contrast it was, we thought, to the stormed-out provinces like Quezon, where logs (illegally cut, they say) rolled down on an avalanche, destroying lives and property, or even to places in Manila where, right this moment, trees are being cut to widen streets.

We met Dr. Edwino S. Fernando, director of the Makiling Center for Mountain Ecosystems (MCME) that is in charge of the Makiling Forest Reserve (MFR) and its programs for forest conservation and ecotourism promotion. He is also a professor of forest botany and a plant taxinomist at UPLB's College of Forestry and Natural Resources. (Why aren't people like him chosen to head the Department of Environment and Natural Resources?)

Among the first things he told us was that there were six watersheds in the forest area, serving Calamba, Los Baños and Bai in Laguna; and Sto. Tomas in Batangas. There were 60 perennial and intermittent streams. Eight water systems tapped those streams for domestic use.

Caretaker of an ecosystem

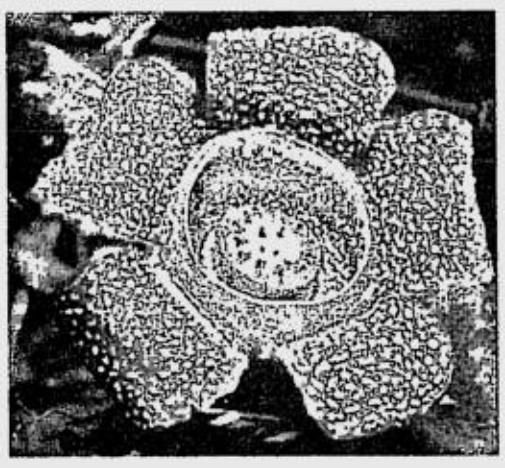
The center does not only look after the trees but also the wildlife, the flora and fauna in the area. Makiling, Dr. Fernando said, was a center of biodiversity. Given the urban spread around it, we realized if he and his colleagues so much as blinked, they might find their forest reserve turned into a graveyard of naked stumps or turned into malls and high-rise buildings.

Fortunately, no one is blinking at UPLB, Dr. Fernando said, apart from a mixed dipterocarp rain forest and mossy forest, the MFR had more than 2,000 flowering plants, 291 species of ferns, 211 of mosses and hundreds of algae and fungi.

It was home to 181 species of birds, 45 of mammals, 22 of amphibians and thousands of insects and arthropods, 65 of reptiles (lizards and snakes) including newly recorded endemic ones—Beyer's skink (once found only in Zambales) and Cuming's mabouya.

Much of the flora of Mt. Makiling is showcased in MFR's Botanic Garden, a protected haven for flora and fauna. At the Botanic Garden, we took a trail where we experienced a real forest ecosystem, along which flowed gushing streams and creeks, and where every now and then a bright-colored bird we'd never seen before flitted overhead. Our hosts made sure we didn't miss it.

DR. NOEL Abraham and his team inspect newly discovered growths of Raffesia Manillana in the Makiling Forest Reserve



THE EXOTIC flower Raffesia Manillana

AERIAL view of the Batangas side of Mt. Makiling. The lower portion is heavily forested, the upper portion shows the industrial zones of Batangas.

Bird sanctuary

We stopped at the Center for Philippine Raptors (the Philippine hawk eagle and the great Philippine eagle, among them). The cages were not yet filled up. Most of the inhabitants came from animal lovers who sent those found injured or captured to MFR for safekeeping and veterinary care. The Botanic Garden is one of Makiling's ecotourism sites, open to trekkers and picnickers.

Dr. Fernando stressed that the MFR was primarily "a training laboratory for the advancement of scientific knowledge on forestry and natural resources." Conservation was an important mandate, keeping MFR officials on their toes as they made sure there were no threats to the forest ecosystem.

The threats might come in the form of illegal settlers or acts of vandalism. For added protection, a buffer zone was measured long ago setting a demarcation line between the MFR and the outlying areas.

Not just a university

The UPLB is a many-splendored institution managed by dedicated Filipino scientists. In one aspect, it is a regular university offering college courses; in another, it is a very specialized institution where study and care of its immediate natural environment are main concerns.

There are laboratories for all kinds of experiments and researches, from agro-forestry to bees, to biotechnology, butterfly breeding, crop protection, dairy training, down to waste treatment.

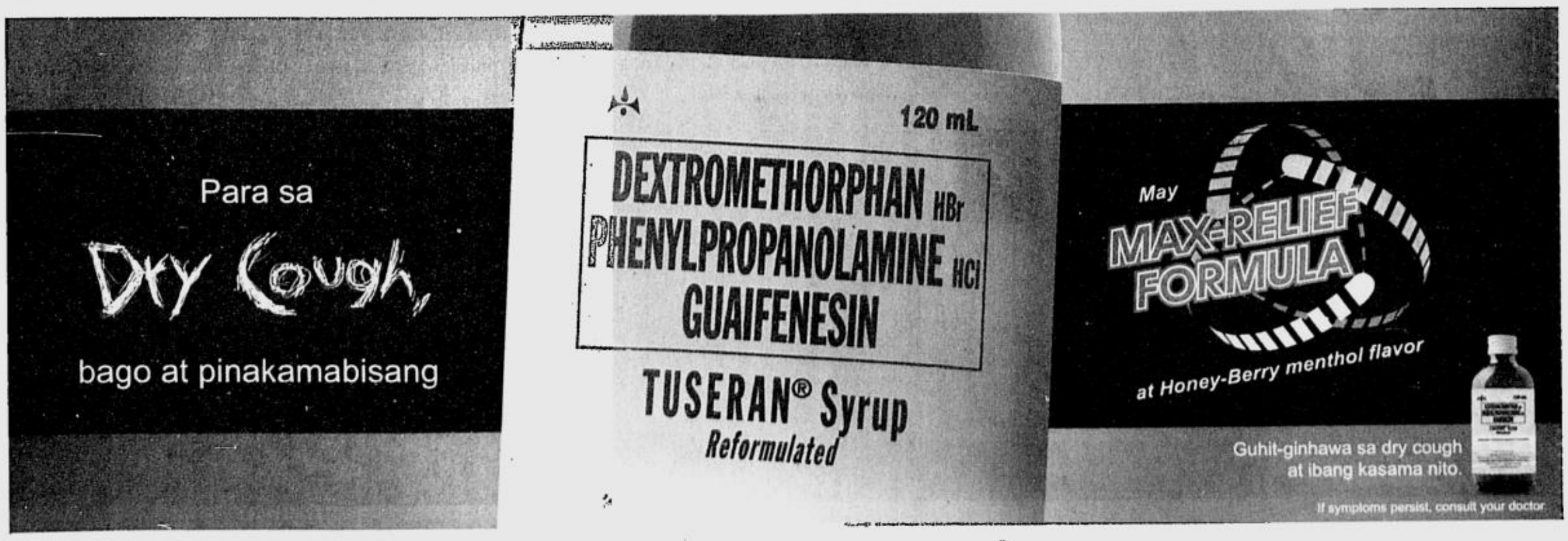
The book "The Mt. Makiling Forest Reserve Development Initiatives & Management Experience," written by professors and experts from the College of Forestry, said: "The (MFR) is a small mountain which can serve as a window to other mountain ecosystems."

To Dr. Fernando, Makiling was "a brand name" not only for its beauty but also for the quality of its forest and environment, the economic, aesthetic and ecological benefits derived from it, as well as its long academic and scientific history. He called further attention to the diversity of the MFR in his new book, "Flowering Plants and Ferns in Mt. Makiling," (sponsored by Korean scientists), illustrated with colored photos on every page. Although not for sale, it is already an important reference source for studies on the Botanic Garden in particular, and of Philippine flora in general.

There is much more to UPLB than space will allow, but we intend to go literally further afield as soon as feasible.

E-mail the author at dorisnuyda@yahoo.com

FORESTER shows results of reforestation and conservation efforts at the Batangas side of the MFP. In 1991, the same site was barren.



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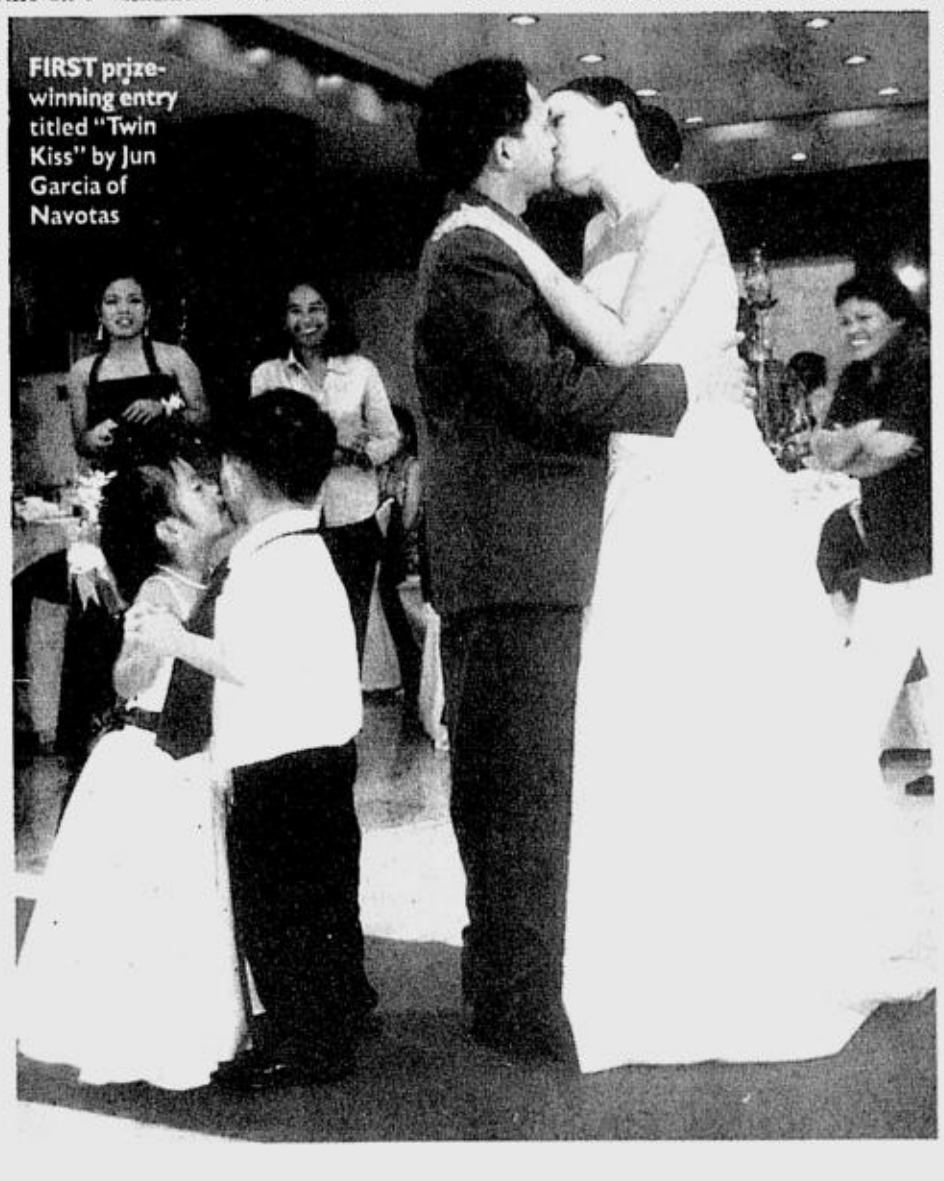


FIRST prize-winning entry titled "Twin Kiss" by Jun Garcia of Navotas

Candid romance

By Cheche V. Moral

Here are wedding photographs to make you smile, laugh, cry and fall in love

SMILE! You're on candid camera!

Weddings are happy events, and nothing reflects this better than snapshots that capture the couple and their guests in off-guard moments, in situations sometimes funny, sometimes poignant, sometimes awkward, sometimes downright embarrassing. More often these are the photos that don't make it to the official wedding album. But these same photos best preserve the joyousness of the occasion, when the photographer and guests with cameras just click away without prompting their subjects to "Smile!"

The "Candid Wedding Photo" contest of the INQUIRER's Sunday Lifestyle, Canon Phils. and cbv7 Media Master sought exactly this sort of photographs. The contest was swamped with over 3,000 entries from professional and amateur photographers. It is is one of the run-up events to the "Wedding March at the NBC Tent" on Jan. 22-23 next year.

Of the entries, the top 3 and 10 consolation-prize winners were chosen by the panel of judges composed of Canon Phils.' senior manager Vincent Sanchez, INQUIRER chief photographer Ernie Sarmiento, photo editor Boy Cabrido and the Lifestyle editor.

The top entry was sent in by a 44-year-old freelance wedding photographer from Navotas.

Jun Garcia's "Twin Kiss" shows the bridal couple caught in a lip-lock while dancing, their two young attendants mimicking them.

Garcia, who was into buy-and-sell before becoming a full-time photographer in 2000 ("Buy-and-sell is boring," he said) took the shot from a wedding in San Pablo City, Laguna, last October. For his entry, he will take home Canon's latest professional digital camera worth P260,000, the EOS 1D Mark II DSLR, launched only a few months ago.

Garcia took the winning photo with a Canon 10D, bought only last August. "I like to use film, but clients now demand that you have a digicam," he notes. The San Pablo wedding was only the second he covered with his new digicam.

Old romance

The second prize is awarded to Fulgencio Rana Jr. of Makati City for his entry "For Adults Only."

The photo shows a seemingly embarrassed elderly woman, seated next to a smooching couple in the bridal car.

The woman is the bride's grandmother, according to Rana. "She was very game," he said. "She laughed when I told the couple not to show their tongue." Rana took the shot slumped on the floor of the limo.

For his shot of the Perez-Navarro wedding last year at the Santuario de San Jose in Greenhills, Rana will get a Canon 10D kit, worth P99,500.

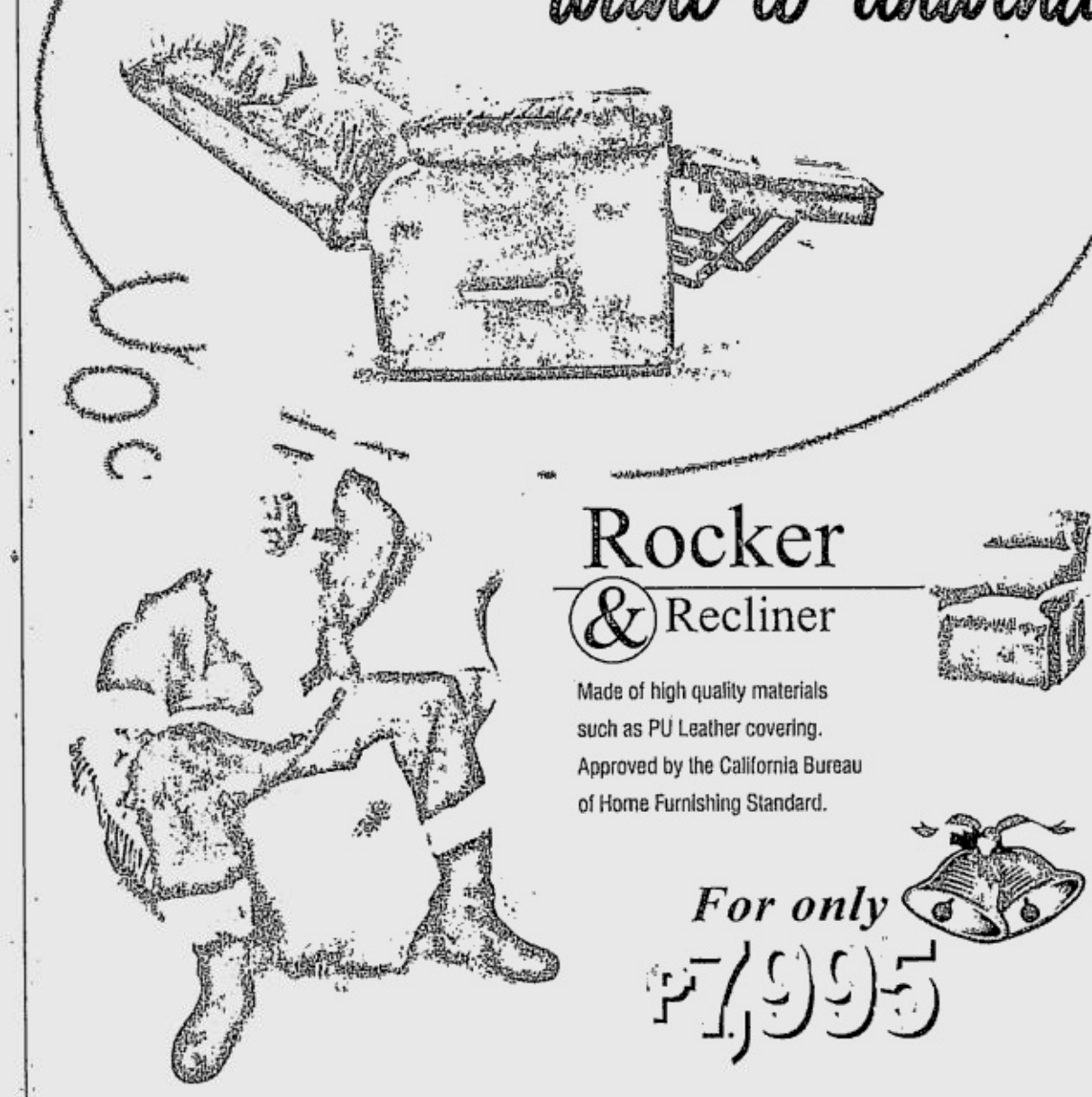
A banker by day and wedding photographer on weekends, Rana, 38, espouses candid or non-traditional wedding photos. He says the trend started with the wave of digital photography, and modern Filipino couples are catching on.

He still takes traditional wedding pictures, but Rana has observed couples today also want a "totally different output. They like coffee-table-book type of wedding albums. They like to see the fun part of the occasion."

Dewey Sergio, 53, of San Pedro, Laguna, will take home the third prize, a Canon 300D kit worth P60,000, for his entry "Hot Na Hot," taken in a *balikbayan* wedding held at Caleruega Dominican chapel in Bat-

CANDID/ E2

Even Santa would want to unwind



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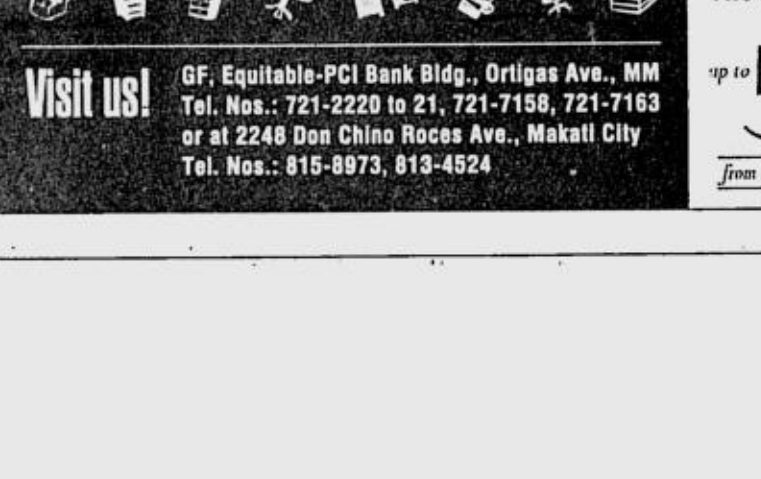

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"FOR ADULTS Only" by Fulgencio Rana Jr. of Makati City, second prize

"HOT Na Hot" by Dewey Sergio of San Pedro, Laguna, third prize

"TEARS of Joy" by Reynaldo Acasio of Bacoor, Cavite

"WHAT'S the Fuss?" by Bobby Timonera of Iligan City

Candid romance

From page E1

ulao, Batangas, a few months ago.

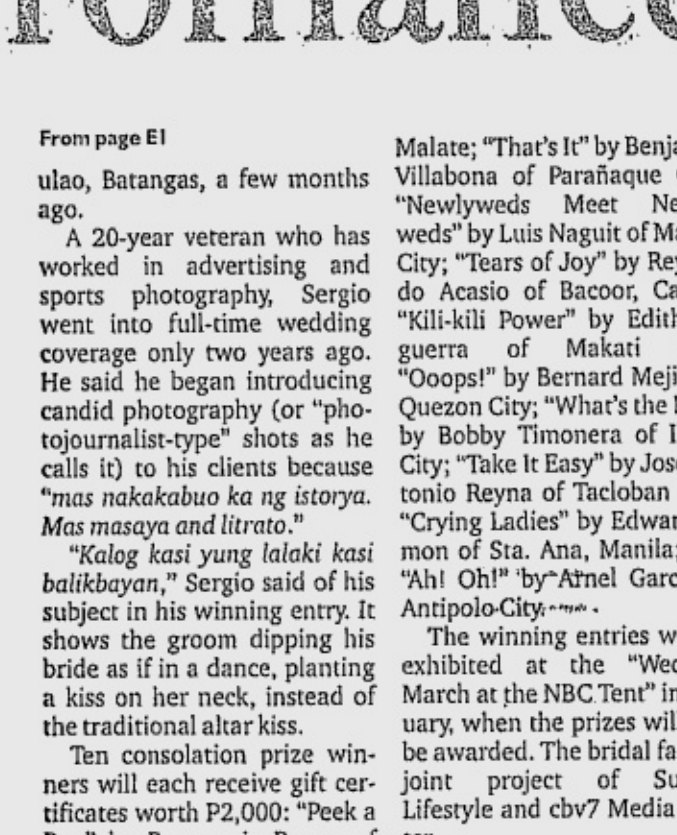
A 20-year veteran who has worked in advertising and sports photography, Sergio went into full-time wedding coverage only two years ago. He said he began introducing candid photography (or "photojournalist-type" shots as he calls it) to his clients because "*mas nakakabuo ka ng istorya. Mas masaya and litrato.*"

"*Kalog kasi yung lalaki kasi balikbayan,*" Sergio said of his subject in his winning entry. It shows the groom dipping his bride as if in a dance, planting a kiss on her neck, instead of the traditional altar kiss.

Ten consolation prize winners will each receive gift certificates worth P2,000: "Peek a Boo" by Rosemarie Razon of Malate; "That's It" by Benjamin Villabona of Parañaque City; "Newlyweds Meet Newlyweds" by Luis Naguit of Makati City; "Tears of Joy" by Reynaldo Acasio of Bacoor, Cavite; "Kili-kili Power" by Edith Esguerra of Makati City; "Ooops!" by Bernard Mejias of Quezon City; "What's the Fuss" by Bobby Timonera of Iligan City; "Take It Easy" by Jose Antonio Reyna of Tacloban City; "Crying Ladies" by Edward Simon of Sta. Ana, Manila; and "Ah! Oh!" by Arnel Garcia of Antipolo City.

The winning entries will be exhibited at the "Wedding March at the NBC Tent" in January, when the prizes will also be awarded. The bridal fair is a joint project of Sunday Lifestyle and cbv7 Media Master.

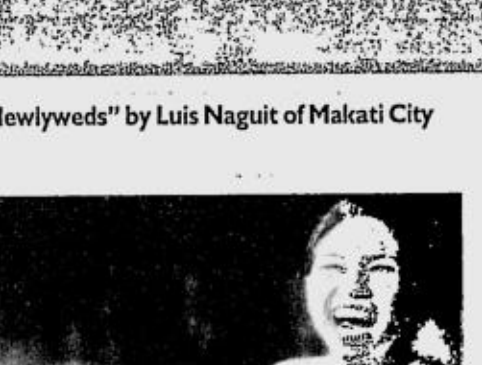
"NEWLYWEDS meet Newlyweds" by Luis Naguit of Makati City



"PEEK-A-BOO" by Rosemarie Razon of Malate, Manila

"THAT'S It" by Benjamin Villabona of Parañaque City

"TAKE It Easy" by Jose Antonio Reyna of Tacloban City



"KILI-KILI Power" by Edith Esguerra of Makati City

"OOOPS!" by Bernard Mejias of Quezon City

"AH! Oh!" by Arnel Garcia of Antipolo City

"CRYING Ladies" by Edward Simon of Sta. Ana, Manila

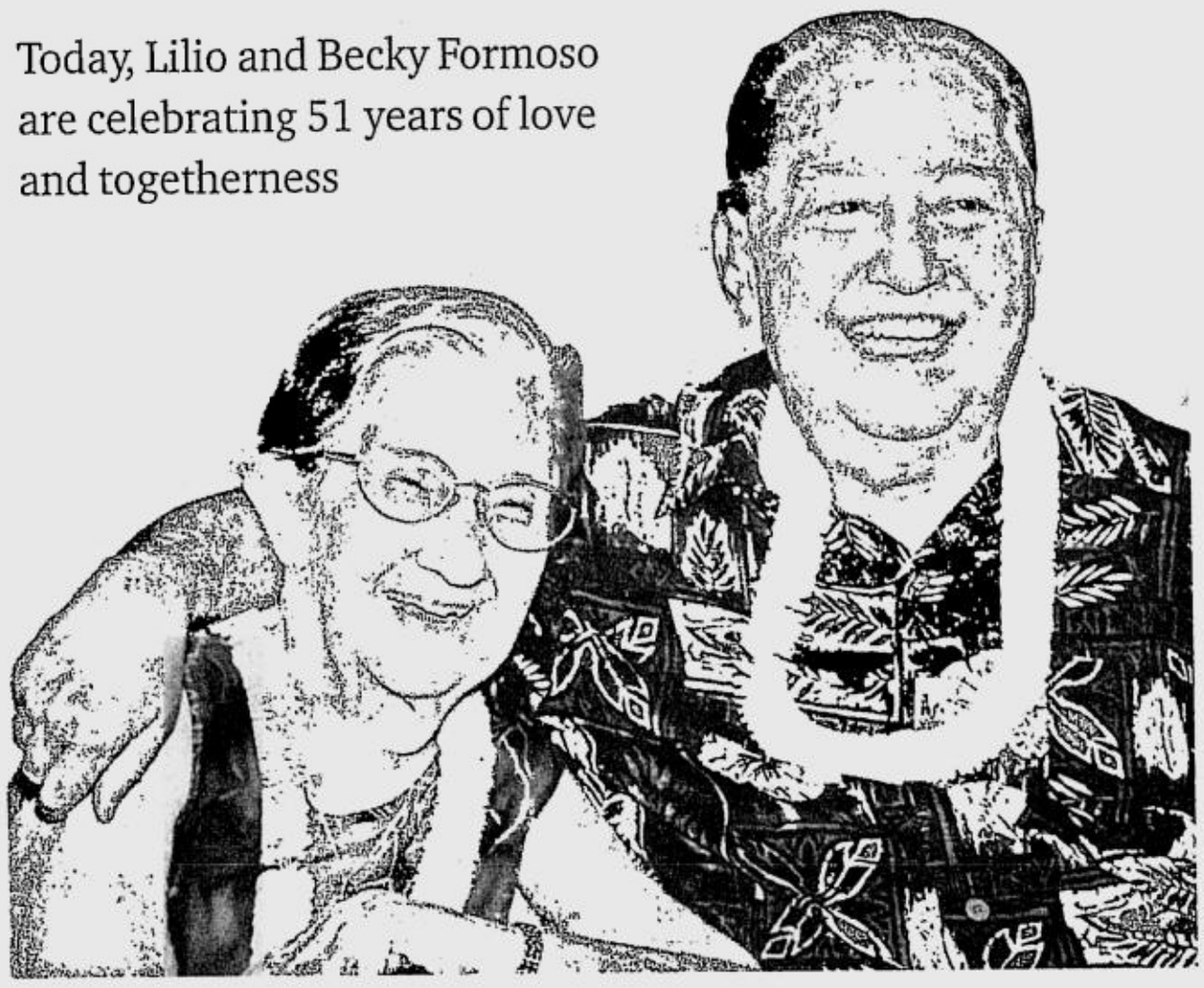
THE ALMOST complete family photo... with only youngest daughter Bettina missing

FAMILY and guests of Lilio and Becky

Ararity of a marriage

By Kara L. Formoso
Contributor

Today, Lilio and Becky Formoso are celebrating 51 years of love and togetherness



MARRIAGE these days isn't what it used to be. A person may get married today and be single again in just a few years, months or even days.

Very few can match the longevity of the union of my *abuelito* and *abuelita*—Lilio and Becky (née Mañosa) Formoso.

Today, Dec. 26, my Ito and Ita are celebrating 51 years of wonderful, love-filled marriage. Last year, of course, when they marked the 50th year since they made their vows, the celebration was really special.

A lot of time and effort was put into the preparation for the celebration. My *Tita* Mitos F. Camahort was feeling harassed overseeing all the arrangements for the important evening. *Tita* Jinggay Formoso came all the way from the United States for the celebration.

My Ito and Ita, and the rest of the family had not seen her in about six years, so you could imagine the excitement and happiness when she arrived. I thought my Ita was going to have a heart attack!

Unfortunately, my *Tita* Bettina Formoso, who is also based in the US, could not make it. Still, the evening turned out to be a beautiful and meaningful moment for my Ito and Ita.

The celebration began with a renewal of their wedding vows administered by the distinguished Fr. James B. Reuter, SJ, a dear family friend. The sight of my grandparents saying their "I dos" all over again was a sweet and funny sight. My utterly corny Ito was telling stupid jokes just to annoy my Ita.

The guests, composed only of family and close friends, were charmed by the intimate and humorous ceremony. When it was over, everyone made a beeline to the buffet table laden with different Spanish and Filipino dishes. Dinner lasted for about almost two hours as "long-lost" family members and friends caught up with one another. It was heartwarming to see everyone laughing and chatting nonstop.

The most important part of the evening was the program that we prepared. My Ita was a Hawaiian teacher in her younger days and her favorite song was the "Hawaiian Wedding Song". So the immediate family, composed of my parents, Ed and Bon Formoso; *Tita* Jinggay; *Tita* Mitos and my funny uncle, *Tito* Poch Camahort; my sister Rebecca; and my youngest cousin, Monica Camahort, performed different Hawaiian dances in appropriate costumes.

But the big hit was the number of my crazy dad and uncle who performed their own ridiculous version of a Hawaiian dance in grass skirts! The number got a standing ovation.

Attention then focused on the big screen showing photographs of my grandparents when they were young.

I had the privilege of narrating the story of their lives as pictures flashed on the screen. Funny comments were made as most guests saw younger versions of themselves on screen. The presentation ended with videos from absent relatives greeting my grandparents "Happy anniversary!"

The program ended with my father, their only son, giving a toast. I have never seen my father cry in my entire life. But this time, I saw tears well in his eyes. He choked on his words as he told his parents how we all loved them and that they were the greatest parents anyone could ever ask for. By this time everyone had tears in their eyes.

My Ito and Ita were very touched, you could see it in their teary eyes.

When the program ended, it was time for family pictures to be taken. The party broke up in the wee hours of the morning.

Today, the day after Christmas, my Ito and Ita will celebrate another year of togetherness with their children and grandchildren.

MORE family members and guests

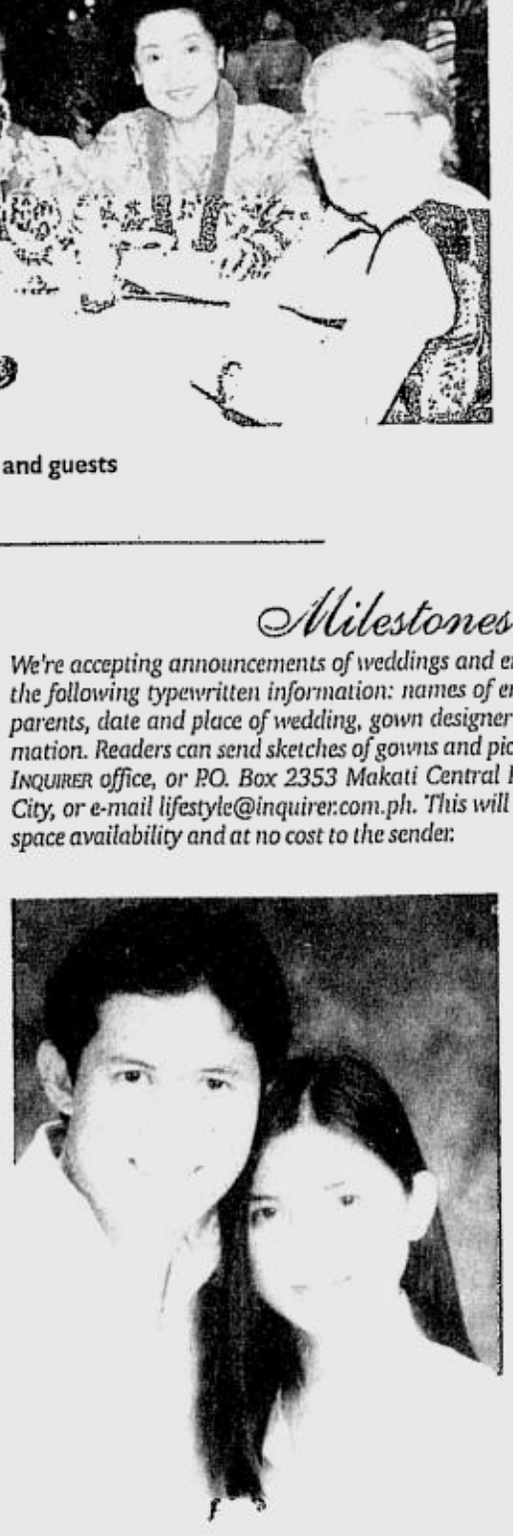
THE FINALE... the children, their spouses and the grandchildren, deserving a standing ovation from the guests

Milestones

We're accepting announcements of weddings and engagements. Please send the following typewritten information: names of engaged couple, names of parents, date and place of wedding, gown designer and other related information. Readers can send sketches of gowns and pictures of the couple to the INQUIRER office, or P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City, or e-mail lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph. This will be printed depending on space availability and at no cost to the sender.

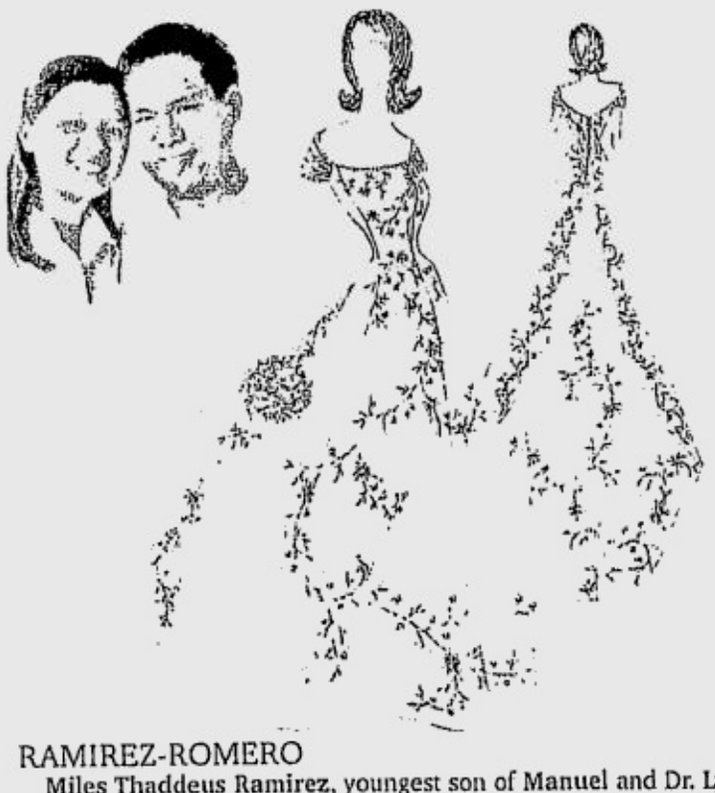
PEREZ-UJIKE

Jose Juancho A. Perez, son of **Leonardo Sr.** (deceased) and **Paz A. Perez** of Butuan City, will exchange marriage vows with **Yoko Ujike**, daughter of Dr. **Osamu** and **Akiko Ujike** of Toyama City, Japan, on Jan. 4, 2005, at the Manila Cathedral. Reception will follow at Ilustrado, Intramuros. The bride will wear a pure white sleeveless and sabrina neckline gown made of duchess satin, with an A-line skirt extended at the back accentuated with beadwork. The gowns of the bride and her entourage are creations by **Bong Enriquez** of Butuan City. The Eucharistic celebration will be officiated by Rev. Fr. **Richard L. Salas**, the groom's high school classmate.



SERRANO-DEL ROSARIO

Zaldy and **Ochie** were married on Dec. 18 at the Island Cove Hotel and Leisure Park.



RAMIREZ-ROMERO

Miles Thaddeus Ramirez, youngest son of **Manuel** and Dr. **Lydia Ramirez**, will marry **Clarissa Grace Romero**, eldest daughter of **Roberto** and **Rosa Isabel Romero**, on Dec. 30 at Saint Joseph Parish, Zamboanga City. Reception will follow at Astoria Regency Zamboanga City.

The bride will wear a duchess silk princess-cut gown with three-meter detachable train, accentuated with floral cascading multicolored embroidery, beadwork with silver threading accent. Scattered Swarovski crystals will make the gown designed by **Merlene J. Marcelo** sparkle.

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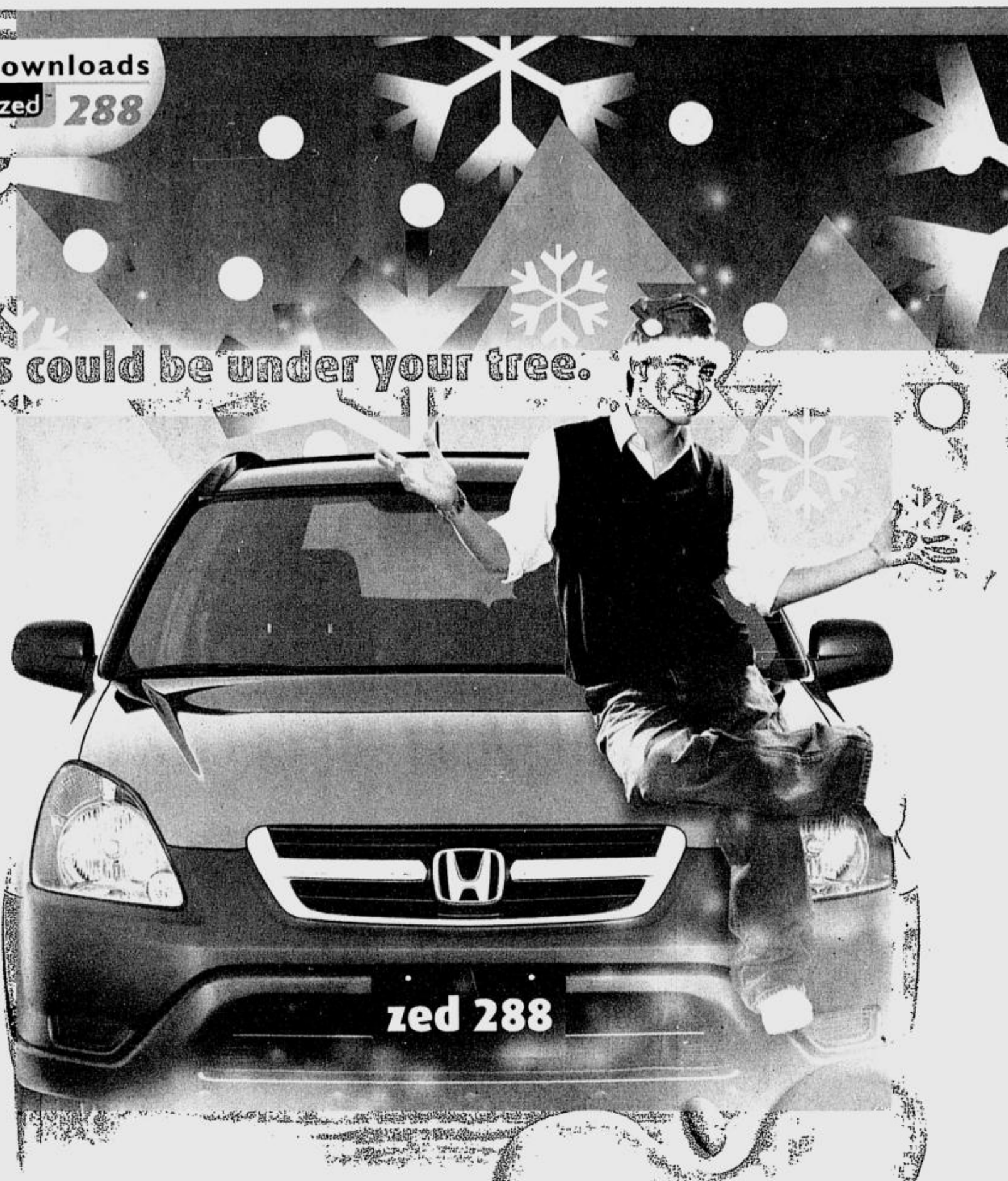

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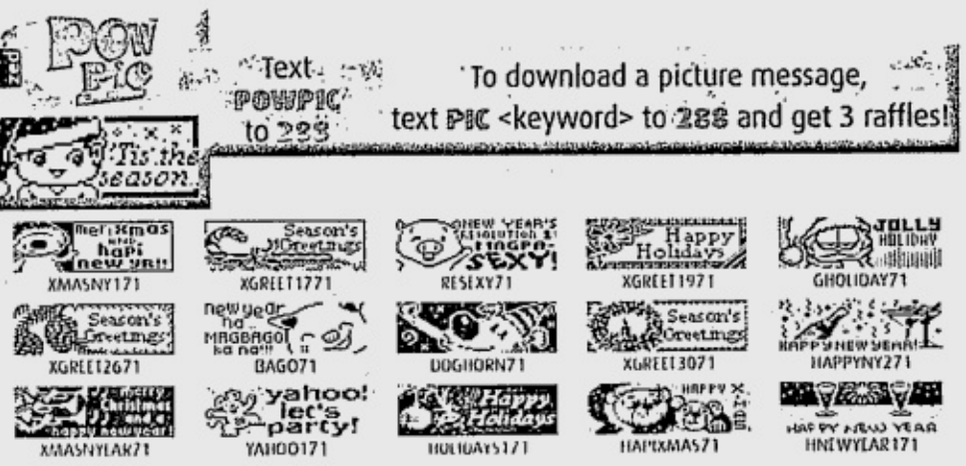

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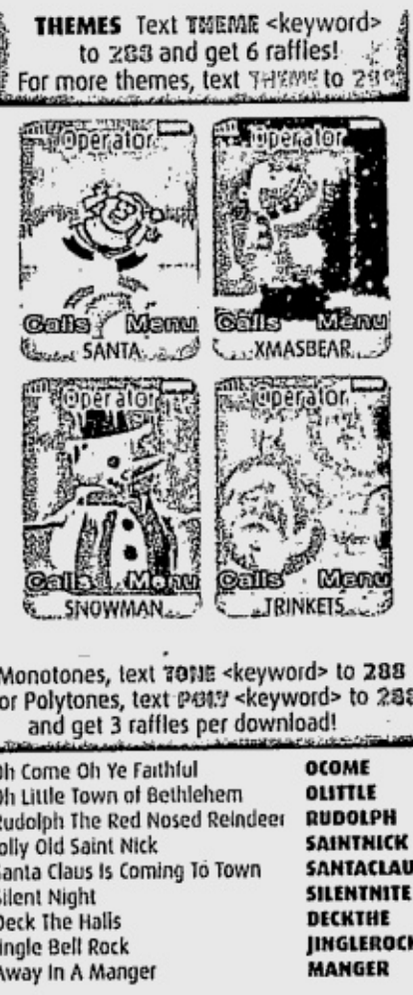

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The Bohemian look is back

T'NT TRENDS & TRENDINGS

Anton San Diego

MUST-go-to resto—Pepato's truffle festival. Everyone's favorite chef (mine definitely!) Margarita Fores just got back from her annual trip to Italy and has loads of gastronomical surprises just in time for the Christmas season. She brought back a bounty of Piedmontese white truffles from Alba and will be serving them with simple dishes (shaved on buttered pasta, risotto, grilled kobe beef or veal scallopine) to highlight their flavor.

She has fresh pasta made from organic eggs, too, or just egg yolks. She also brought back *bottarga di muggine, prosciutto san daniele* and special cheeses. She brought along three members of her team and learned the art of pizza making in Italy. Her other popular restaurant Cibo (on its eighth branch) will be serving these Italian staples soon.

Make your reservations now (tel. 7572636) as I am sure anything that Margarita comes up with will be in demand! Buon Apetito!

Bohemian is back! Although it may strike the wrong note in some people, the updated Bohemian/hippie look is more luxe than boho. So greet the new year with color and free spirit in these happy and billowy dresses. Italian houses—Blumarine, Etro, Fendi and Emilio Pucci (now under the LV group) set the tribute to the '70s look. Don't just rummage through your mom's closet; this one is updated, fresh and now!

Birthday pampering. I just turned 38 years old and I must say I have never felt so old in my life. In my youth, when people said they were 38 I would think, "My, that's ancient!" Today I find my karma: I have become a museum piece as well.

So how did I spend my birthday this year? Last year I had a fun party, but this year I was in need of some serious pampering so I headed off to Bangkok. I stayed at the newly renovated Shangri-La Hotel and got myself some much needed R&R. After a total of nine hours of massage (from different spas including Shangri-La's Chi and Oriental Spa, Banyan Tree—more next week), body scrub, healing stones, yoga, etc., I feel like a totally rejuvenated piece of kobe beef.

I had ample time to reflect on a lot of things and I came to the realization that where I am now is exactly where I should be. I would never trade the things I learned this year, the blessings, the people I have met, the struggles and victories for anything, not even a year's supply of La Mer!

A friend of mine sent me this birthday quote by actress Susan Sarandon, which encapsulates my sentiments. "I look forward to being older, when what I look like becomes less and less an issue and what I am is the point."

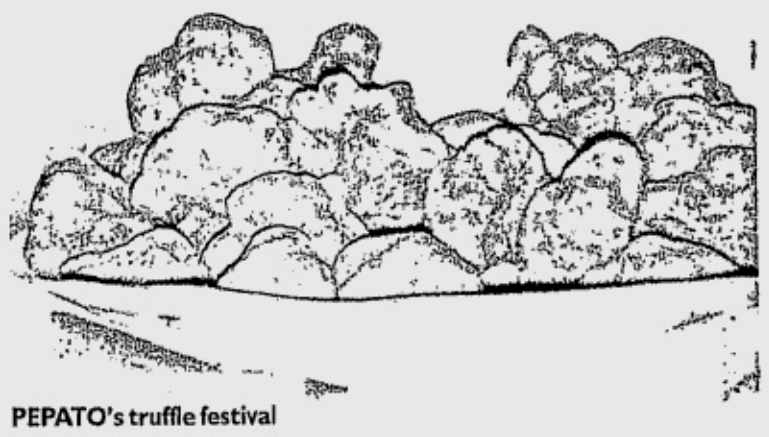
I guess the most important aspect of growing older is being wiser, going beyond mere aesthetics and learning to be better and more self-evolved person. It's been so good so far.

Must-watch movie—"Meet the Fokkers." With all the movies that's coming out during the Christmas holidays, there's one movie that I can't wait to see. From the title alone you know it's going to be a hilariously wild ride. "Meet the Fokkers" is the sequel to the very successful "Meet the Parents." Watch out for it in Manila cinemas in January 2005.

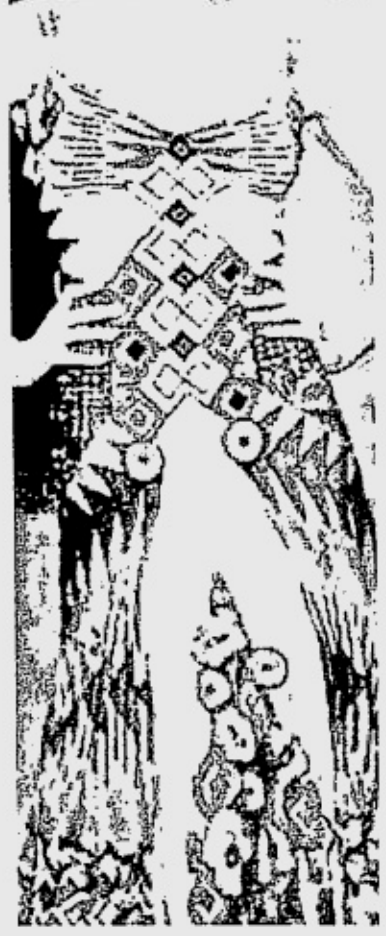
15 New Year's Resolutions: I am going to get ahead of the pack and give you my new year's resolutions. You can share some of mine if you are still thinking of your own. Here goes.

- Stay away from my obsession with reality TV shows. Why would I be interested in a "Survivor" getting booted out. I'm not winning the million dollars!
- Vow not to buy pirated DVDs. I'll just have them delivered to my house.
- Pay my bills on time. To avoid the risk of getting my credit card and utilities cut off.
- Do things I enjoy and spend time with positive people. So you'll see me more in Red Box and will pray Oprah needs an assistant?
- Get my ultimate fitness wish: A six-pack. Will settle for two or four by December 2005.
- Stop gossiping, complaining and arguing. (Yeah, right!)
- Save money.
- Not to rush when having a meal. I must instead chew and enjoy my food.
- Learn a new sport or hobby. Billiards and crocheting are on the top of my list.
- Learn not to be annoyed when people spit on the street, pick their teeth, make funny noises when they eat or pick their nose in public. Rather help them get over their annoying habits and videotape them.
- Stop laughing at fat cops, politicians and Pinoys who mistake their P's for F's and vice versa.
- Try to upstage Tessa Valdes and Tim Yap when it comes to dressing. (Tall order!)
- Get over my fear and use those ugly pink urinals on Edsa (just for the heck of it. Note to self: Bring Lysol.)
- Banish black-and-white from my wardrobe, or maybe use it every other day.
- Lastly, never to cease praying for our country and its people. 2004 was a sad and disastrous year—calamities, terrorism, plagues and natural disasters. But through perseverance in prayers and having faith and hope, the tide will change.

E-mail the author at antonsd@philtatler.com.



PEPATO's truffle festival



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INQUIRER COMICS Sunday

DECEMBER 26, 2004

1

e-mail feedback: arts@inquirer.com.ph

RAGNAROK

BY ROBERT WONG

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PUGAD BABOY

BY POL MEDINA JR.

MOTHER GOOSE & GRIMM

BY MIKE PETERS

ZITS

BY JERRY SCOTT AND JIM BORGMAN

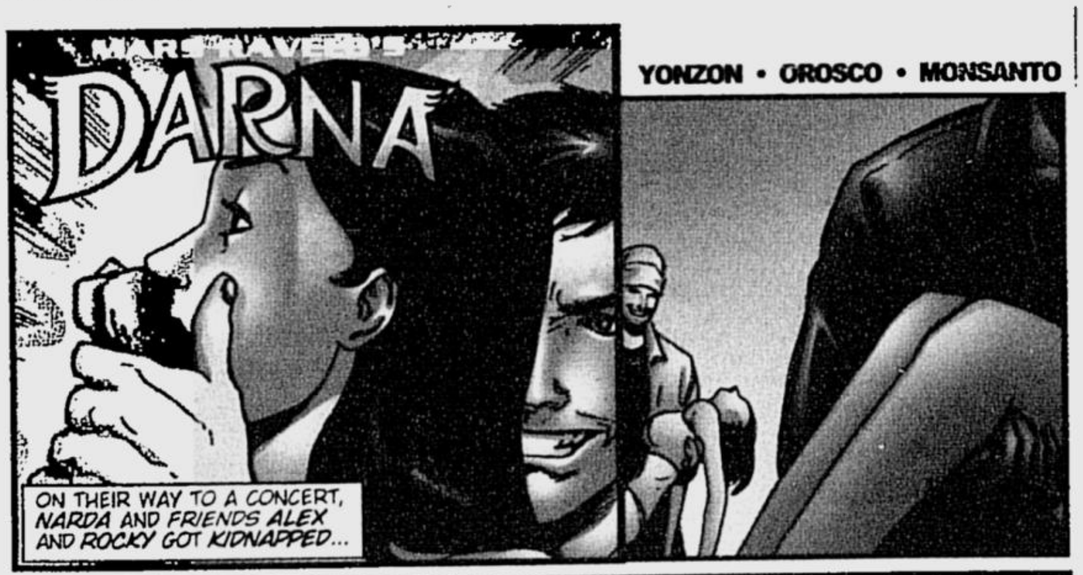
Read the Inquirer Comics Sunday and get a chance to win weekly prizes from Ragnarok, Filbars and Fully Booked or a PC in the Grand Draw! Text INQVOTE to 291 (SMART) and 2949 (Globe) now!*
Congratulations to last week's winners: 1) Hasmin Almencion, Marikina City 2) Eduardo Barruga, Ilocos Norte, 3) Joan Bermundo, Bacacay, Albay
To claim your prizes, please call (02)897-8808 loc. 352. Look for Mr. Dennis Leung
*SEE PROMO PRINT ADS FOR DETAILS

INDAY WANDA

BY BLOG CALIGUIA

DARNA

BY MANGO COMICS

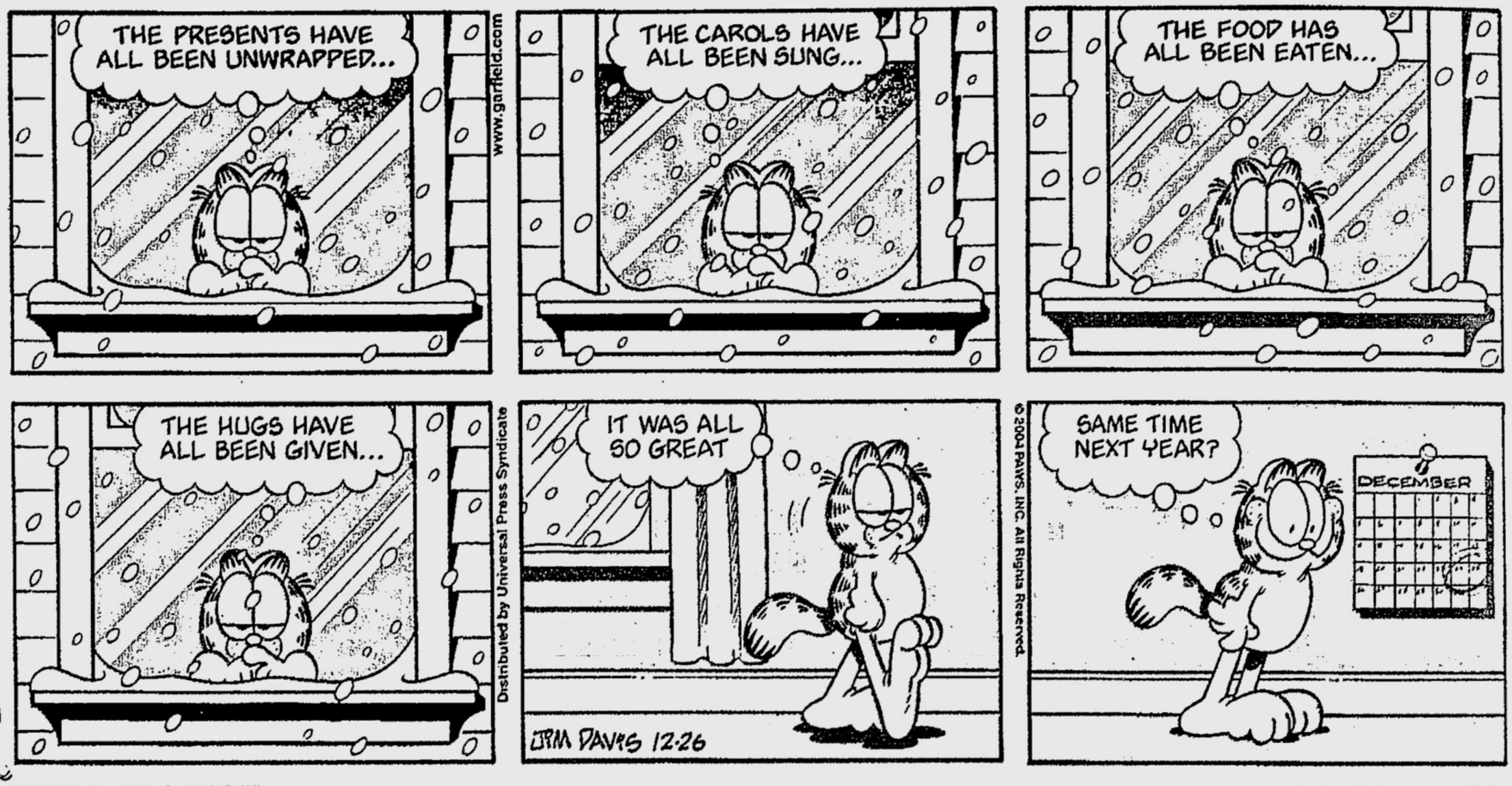


FROM THE NATIONAL BOOK AWARDEE DARNA BY MANGO COMICS

FOLD OUT AT CENTER TO GET THE BIG PICTURE

GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS



FULL HOUSE

BY STEPH BRAVO

B. TURN THE PAGE TO GET IT RIGHT

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2004

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Sunday LIFESTYLE

dback, e-mail us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

Text us your feedback:
inquirer life name/city/message to
(Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Life and style in 2004

AS far as lifestyle goes, 2004 is best summed up as the year I-Pod turned into the hottest object of desire, and brooches—made of either real or faux stones—became mainstays in a woman's wardrobe alongside pearl necklaces, tweed jackets, tiered skirts, Kelly bags, round-toe pumps and knitted shawls.

In a way, it was also a year of contradictions, as the young and not-so-young

> Everyone went on the South Beach Diet, but women ended up hiding their brand-new, hard-won bodies in tweedy blazers and granny chic

shunned carbs—but not Go Nut Donuts—and gobbled more than their fair share of protein as they went either on Atkins or South Beach (yes, dieting has now become a proper noun) only to hide their brand-new, hard-fought bodies behind layers of tweedy outfits fashionistas called Granny chic. Suddenly, looking old beyond one's years was so in.

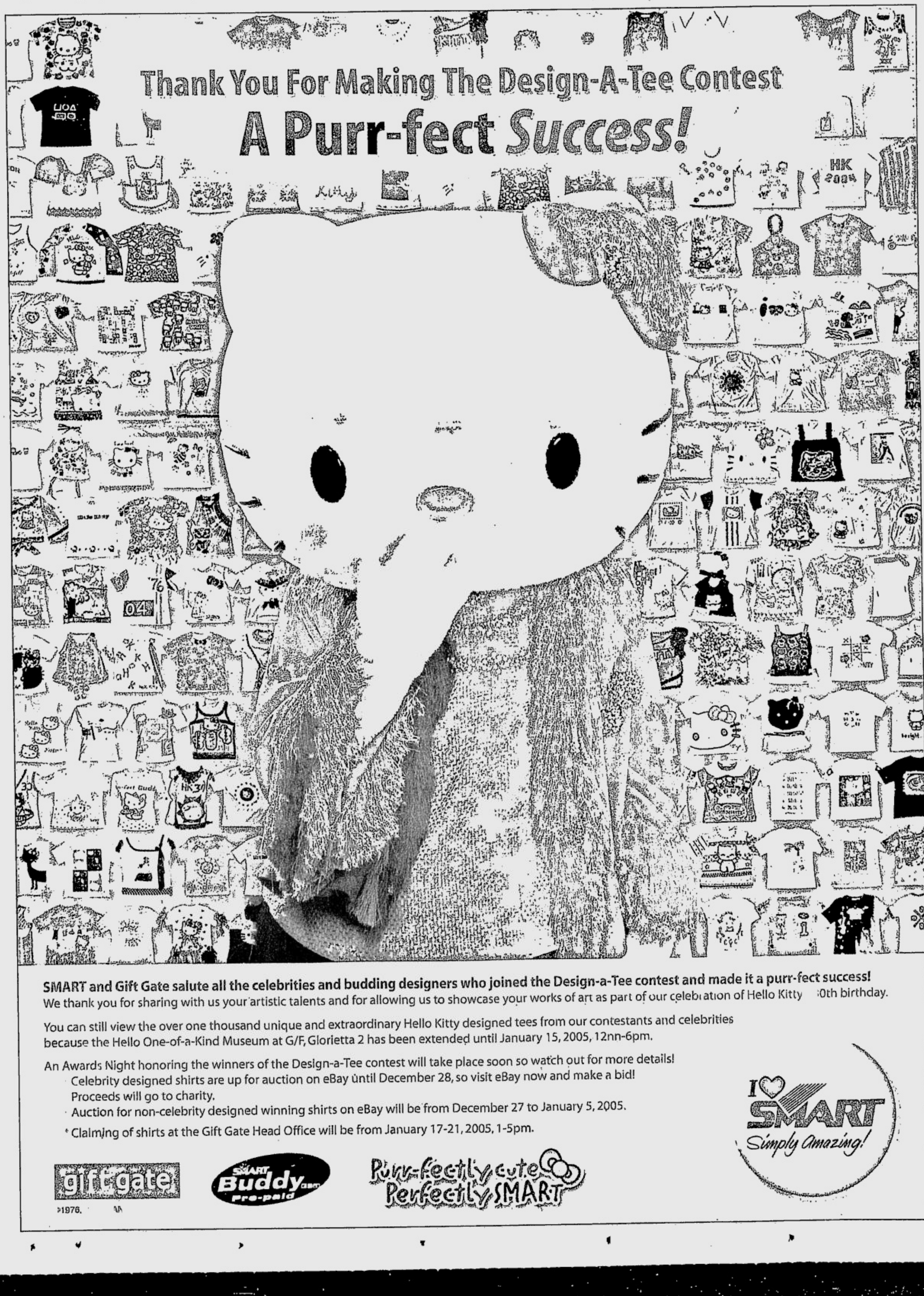
Incidentally, the South Beach Diet spawned a book with the same name by Dr. Arthur Agatston, and suddenly weight watchers were more concerned with their "glycemic index" rates than their blood pressures and, well, weight.

As the "South Beach Diet" soared to the top of the non-fiction list, Dan Brown's "The Da Vinci Code" continued to lord it over other works of fiction, causing a worldwide phenomenon and leaving countless Christians (okay, Catholics) questioning their faith and looking a tad longer at "The Last Supper."

The words "sacred feminine" have yet to make it to Webster's, but to countless Brown "converts," Mary Magdalene's role in the early Church would never be the same again.

With reports from Alex Vergara, Tino Tejero, Vangie Baga-Reyes, Anne Jambora, Cheche Moral, Pam Pastor, Rowena Burgos and Gibbs Cadiz

LIFE/ G2



SMART and Gift Gate salute all the celebrities and budding designers who joined the Design-a-Tee contest and made it a purr-fect success!
We thank you for sharing with us your artistic talents and for allowing us to showcase your works of art as part of our celebration of Hello Kitty 30th birthday.

You can still view the over one thousand unique and extraordinary Hello Kitty designed tees from our contestants and celebrities because the Hello One-of-a-Kind Museum at G/F, Glorietta 2 has been extended until January 15, 2005, 12nn-6pm.

An Awards Night honoring the winners of the Design-a-Tee contest will take place soon so watch out for more details!
- Celebrity designed shirts are up for auction on eBay until December 28, so visit eBay now and make a bid! Proceeds will go to charity.
- Auction for non-celebrity designed winning shirts on eBay will be from December 27 to January 5, 2005.
- Claiming of shirts at the Gift Gate Head Office will be from January 17-21, 2005, 1-5pm.

I ♥ SMART Simply Amazing!

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SMART Buddy pre-paid

Purr-fectly cute Perfectly SMART

Fashion

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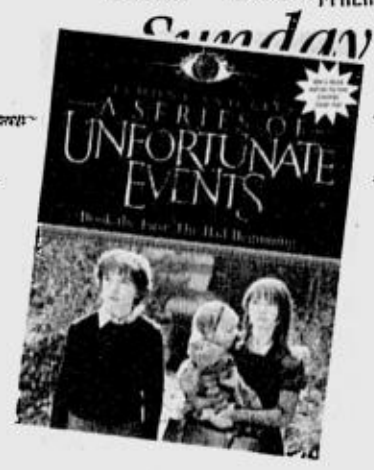

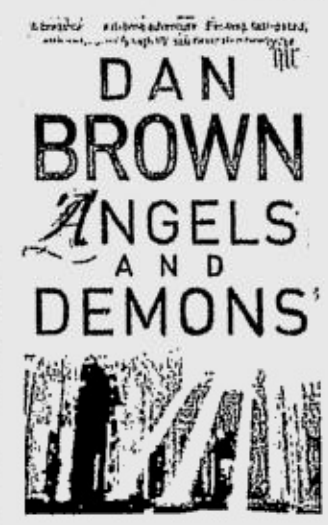

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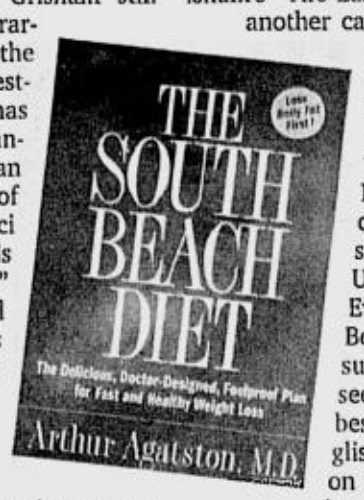

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Life and s

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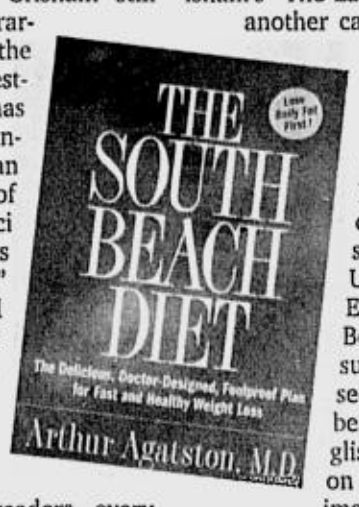

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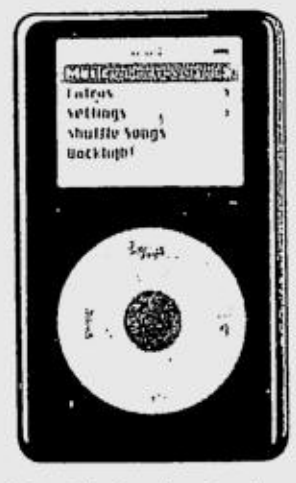

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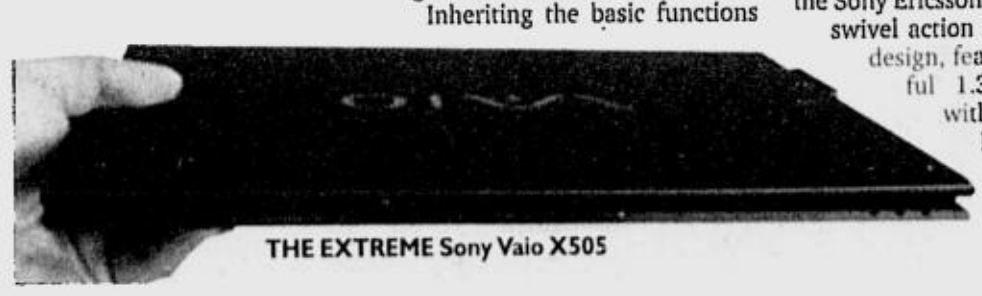

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The visual arts

ANITA Magsaysay-Ho's "Peanut Vendors"

Magsaysay-Ho turns 90

The Grand Lady of Philippine Art celebrated her 90th birthday in March with a show of three major paintings, several watercolor pieces and numerous drawing studies at the Crucible Gallery.

She did this at an age when other artists either have long retired or are churning out minor works.

The show reaffirmed why Magsaysay-Ho was the only female artist allowed into the circle of the Thirteen Moderns, and why she should have been our first woman National Artist in Painting.

State of visual arts

Mobilized by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, artists from all regions of the archipelago converged to present multimedia installations in the CCP Main Gallery and hallways during "Sungdu-an" in March. What emerged was a synthesis of the state of the visual arts in the country today.

Mall culture

Over at the Podium in August, Finale Art File presented "Display," a gathering of six young artists from Singapore and the Philippines that portrayed mall culture and deconstructed the malling experience.

Curated by Gerry Tan, the project exemplified the successful collaboration and interaction of artists not just from the regions but from different countries.

"Group Show," a year-ender ongoing at the SM Megamall and Glorietta and curated by Roberto Chabet, offers 360 artworks from 60 artists. The widest variety of artistic styles and mediums ever assembled in one exhibition, this one is a virtual showcase of three generations of Philippine art.

Major league

The Philippine Drawing Society Competition, an ongoing exhibit in the Art Center at the SM Megamall's Artwalk, is attracting over 140 entries in any drawing medium, along with the drawings of some 20 established artists. This is the biggest effort so far to push drawing into the league of the major art forms.

Top-selling masterpieces

Filipino masters made news in the Sotheby's auction of Southeast Asian paintings in Singapore in October. Juan Luna's "Steel Mills" became the second most expensive lot in the auction when it sold for S$518,000.

Fabian de la Rosa's "Woman," estimated at S$9,500, became one of the biggest surprises when it sold for over S$30,000. Meanwhile, Anita Magsaysay-Ho's "Gleaners" soared from S$120,000 to S$250,000. (Do we hear some murmuring from the GSIS?)

PACITA Abad

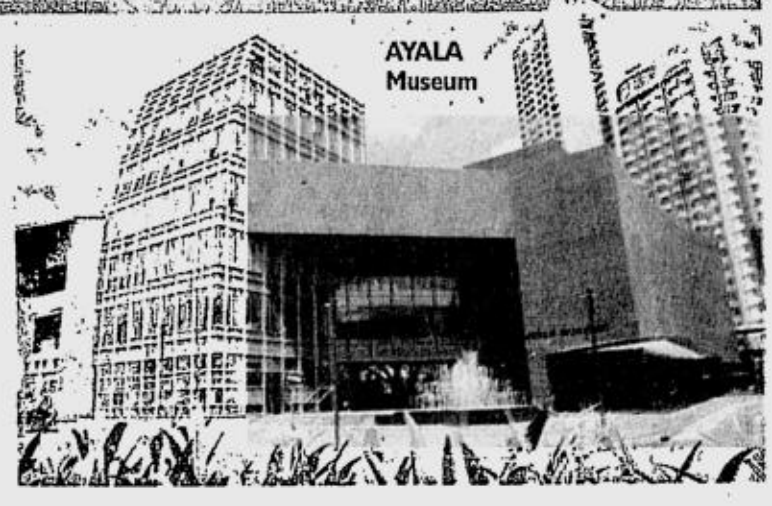
Salvo of glorious art

The new Ayala Museum opened to the public at Greenbelt 4 in October—a handsome four-story structure of granite, glass, wood, concrete and steel. For the inaugural, it sent a salvo of four grand exhibitions.

Starting last month through June next year, it is showcasing 70 years of Philippine modern art with 32 selected works by 27 artists loaned by the Singapore National Heritage Board, which has one of the biggest collections of Philippine art abroad.

Return of the native

After living in over 100 countries, artist Pacita Abad died of lung cancer in Singapore early this month and was returned to her Batanes homeland. Abad, part of the diaspora of Filipino artists some decades ago, was noted for her colorful *trapunto* art, which collaged embroidery and painting. She visited Manila in September for "Circles in My Mind," her final exhibit in the country of her birth.


AYALA Museum

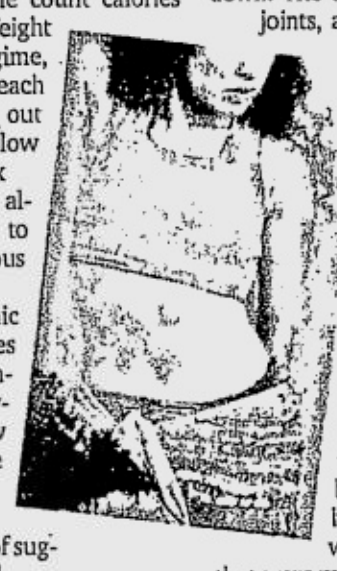
Fitness

Atkins loses out to SBD

The South Beach Diet overtook the Atkins method as the newest weight-loss rage in 2004.

The book, "The South Beach Diet" by Dr. Arthur Agatston, has been a bestseller for months and has moved ahead of "Atkins for Life" to top The New York Times bestseller list.

While people count calories on the Weight Watchers regime, the South Beach Diet picks out foods with low glycemic-index numbers and allows dieters to eat generous portions.



The glycemic index rates foods that contain carbohydrates on how quickly they're digested and how they affect the level of sugar in the blood.

The South Beach Diet has three phases and recommends high-fiber foods, fresh vegetables and lean meat, but it also allows for an occasional indulgence. Easy-to-follow instructions keep dieters from having to count the numbers the way they do on calorie-counting regimes.

A later-released cookbook complemented the original diet book.

Good year for badminton

More badminton courts opened in the fringes of urban centers, making it possible for the middle class to play a round or two. It didn't hurt that badminton is an indoor sport and is thus accessible throughout the year. More companies joined tournaments, as did more individual players, creating a demand for a specialty publication like the INQUIRER Badminton Monthly. And sportswear manufacturers have been only too quick to come out with a badminton fashion line. Combined with the South Beach diet, badminton is a winner.

Way to de-stress

Belly dancing is considered a folk dance in Turkey. But for women of all ages, it's a unique way to get in shape. Those who take hour-long classes don't just move parts of their body, but the entire caboodle.

The neck and shoulders move, the chest and diaphragm lift. The pelvis goes up and down. The dance is soft on the joints, and yet it's very energetic and very aerobic.

A single belly dance session works hundreds of muscles, burns calories and helps one to de-stress.

Mind-body workout

Yoga and Pilates continued to be popular in 2004, but the trend was to blend mind-body workouts with those that were more traditional, such as yoga using a stability ball.

Buff arms and a yoga-booty aren't the only reasons people are flocking to yoga. This "mind-body" system of postures, like downward-facing dog and cobra, can ease stress.

Pilates, on the other hand, is synonymous with "core" training, because the various exercises use and strengthen the muscles in the abdomen, back, upper legs and buttocks. Method exercises also encourage increased flexibility, joint mobility and range-of-motion.

Take-home or work out

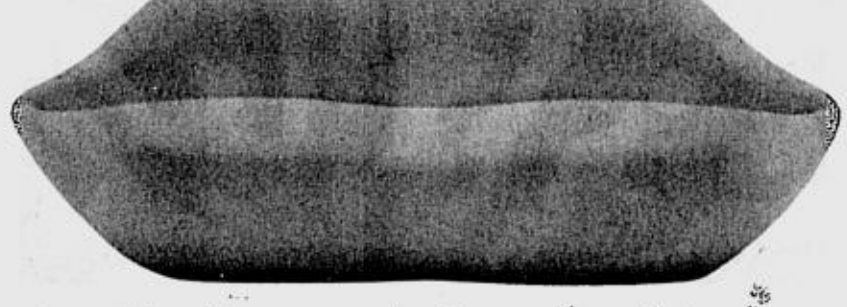
As home exercise videos and DVDs became more attractive to fitness buffs, more gyms also opened in malls, as if to drive home the message that shopping isn't enough exercise.

A well-rounded collection of workouts covering all areas of fitness that include strength, cardiovascular training and flexibility is available on videos and DVDs. But for some people, nothing beats having a personal trainer, and the social benefits of going to gym on a regular basis.

INQUIRER Badminton Monthly

tyle in 2004

Digit



artha's graveyard?

The gracious façade Martha ewart carefully crafted rough the years finally crumed this year as America's preiere doyenne of home and tertaining was found guilty conspiracy, obstruction and o counts of lying to investitors in connection with the 01 sale of her stocks in the otech company Imclone.

Before her misdeeds started unravel, the home-style diva is at the helm of a multimiln-business empire responsie for producing her popular ble TV show "Martha Stewt Living." It spawned a onthly glossy magazine with e same title.

According to a CNN report, ewart began reporting to a nimum-security prison in derson, West Virginia, to start rving a five-month sentence. e was also fined $30,000, on p of five months of home conement and two years of supered probation after her release.

ix and match

Although trends in interior sign closely follow that of shion, furniture pieces, unke clothes, aren't as easily bjected to the changing ims of style arbiters. After , says Kish, changing the so- is a lot more expensive and complicated than buying the latest tops and bottoms.

Thus, "mix matching" or "personalizing," wherein new key pieces are mixed with old yet classic ones, became quite a trend this year.

Apart from the savings it generated, it allowed people to veer from the uncluttered hotel look commonly featured in most interior design magazines (and adopted by not a few interior designers). Homogeneity gave way to a more nuanced look as more homeowners gained confidence to express themselves.

Hot chocolate

While the color green made a splash on runways, chocolate brown became the shade of choice in most homes this year. Since walls can look a tad gloomy if painted entirely in dark brown, furniture and interior designers such as Ito Kish used it as an accent color to paint doors and certain sections of the house.

Lighter shades such as cream, ivory and moss green allowed limited areas covered in luscious chocolate to stand out.

Curtains to drapes

The look of luxury may have been pretty big, but most homemakers were still in a penny-pinching mood. This was reflected in people's limited use of heavy drapery. Drapes were confined mainly on valances and both sides of the window, as relatively cheaper, low-maintenance blinds literally took center stage.

Leather-bound

Never mind if Filipinos have yet to experience winter in the Philippines, the warm feel of real leather was pretty big on the home front this year.

It came primarily in neutral colors such as black, brown, beige and white, says Kish, but wasn't limited to chairs and sofas and the usual accent or throw pillows.

Leather found its way on tables as centerpieces or on the floor via area rugs made to look like crocodile hide or a patchwork of small pieces in varying hues.

Lap of luxury

Rich fabrics in the form of curtains and upholstery also made a comeback this year. As a result of mix matching, faux fur was among the materials of choice for such accent pieces as footstools. Toile de joie prints, Kish adds, are bound to get bigger next year.

CANON 300D

ore photos and videos, extra large 2.3" TFT n with a Horizontal Usterface, a five-way Navion Pad, PlayNow for muownloads, and more.

e SE S700i is designed uch like a sleek digital ra that you just might t it's a cell phone.

reme notebook

is notebook, nicknamed xtreme, tips the scale at ounds. The lightest in world, says Sony, the X505 comes with a screen, Pentium M z processor, 20 GB hard drive and 512 MB RAM. Remarkably slim at less than an inch thick, it's crafted with a carbon hybrid material.

THE SLIM Sony PlayStation 2

Affordable pro digi cam

Digital SLR cameras are finally within everyone's reach. With the Canon 300D and Nikon D70 DSLRs aimed for the $1,000 market, anyone can now become a pro—or at least pretend to be one anyway—by simply clicking its user-friendly features. Both are excellent cameras for newbies and pros alike. After all, it's the eye of the photographer that matters, and not the camera.

Food

Specialty diets

The South Beach Diet tops the list of so-called specialty diets that hit this year's food scene.

Fad or not, more and more people are getting hooked on what SBD promises its followers. SBD is said to be a healthy, easy and effective but natural and tasteful way to lose weight.

With SBD's popularity, it didn't take long for a number of chefs to whip up special SBD recipes to help would-be converts as well as make it easier for believers to stick to the food regimen.

SBD meals can now be delivered to one's home or office from some of the country's leading restaurateurs. Leading the pack are Cibo's Margarita Fores, Le Souffle's Jessie Sincioco, Top of the Citi's Florabel Co and sisters Rachel and Barni Alejandro. Their menus feature dishes that strictly follow the guidelines set by Agatston.

A close second to SBD is the low-carbohydrate, high-protein food diet. Filipinos today are counting their carbs. As such, restaurant chains such as TGI Friday's and Chili's have included low-carb selections in their menus.

Even Burger King now has a bun-less Whopper. Subway offers a low-carb wrap, while Carl's Jr. has a lettuce-wrapped burger.

Drink without rules

If you want to talk "rules" of wine and food pairing, the oldest one in the book is red with meat, white with fish or fowl.

But with all the wine-and-food-tasting events in 2004, both chefs and their clientele have learned to buck the rule. They've declared that it's okay to have Pinot Noir, which is a light red wine, or even Merlot with seafood. More chefs now believe it's impossible to ruin a good meal if you select a wine that you enjoy.

Frozen foods

Filipinos' eating habits have changed drastically over the years, as people have gotten busier.

Thus, supermarkets now sell frozen precooked "homemade" foods such as *sisig*, *adobo*, *laing* and even boneless *bangus* with rice and topped with a variety of sauces. A few minutes on the microwave and you're on your way to a really good snack or meal.

Even 24-hour convenient stores such as Mini-Stop and 7-11 now offer consumers instant choices—from sandwiches to pizza to beef *tapa* and *longganisa*.

Nuts over donuts

The success and popularity of Go Nuts Donuts could be gleaned from the long lines leading to its counters when its first outlet opened at The Fort.

Go Nuts is said to be a "new-generation donut"—softer, lighter and melts in your mouth. Many people agree that it's less sweet than more popular brands, and has done away with the subtle lemony taste distinct in American-made donuts.

Culinary career

Not a few have discovered that one important step to a successful culinary career is to find a highly respected school that offers world-class education. The opening of the International School for Culinary Arts and Hotel Management (ISCAHM) tries to answer this quest.

ISCAHM provides the training and expertise one needs to begin a career in the culinary industry. The instructors, led by chef Norbert Gandler and Hans Schallenberg, bring with them years of experience and discriminating palettes.

The school combines demonstration, followed by hands-on practical courses in professionally equipped, modern kitchens. On top of its world-class curriculum, students are encouraged to explore their own styles, creativity and cultural backgrounds.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

'Unseen' Filipino artworks at Ayala Museum

JIN WAI Theng of Keppel, SM Supermalls VP Annie Garcia, Singaporean Ambassador Lim Kheng Hua and Singapore Tourism Board's Rocson Chang RYAN LIM

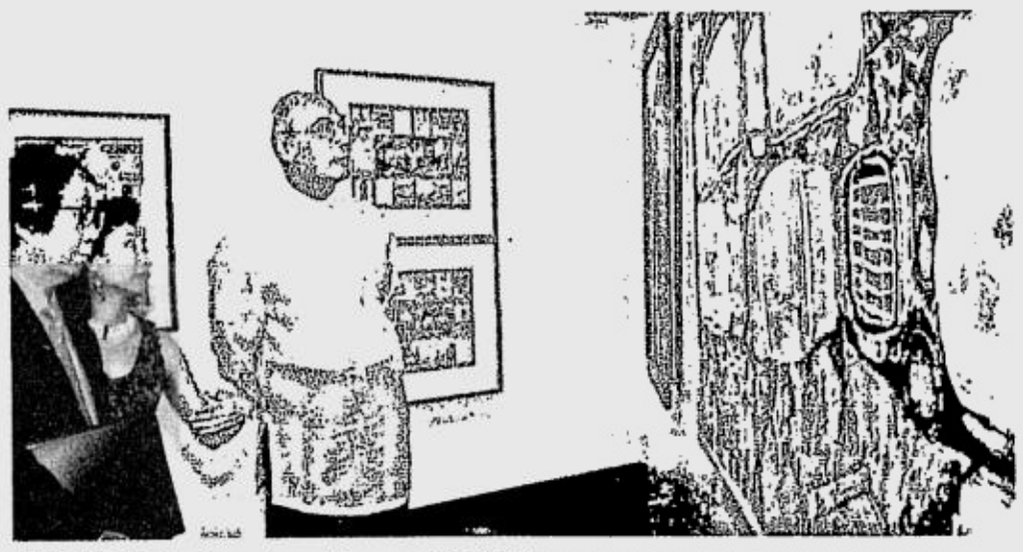
DO DROP by the Ayala Museum for a look at 32 artworks by Filipino artists, many never been exhibited in public in the Philippines.

"Crossings: Philippine Works from the Singapore Art Museum" showcases close to a century of Philippine art from **Fabian de la Rosa**'s "Portrait of Jose Rizal" to **Nunelucio Alvarado**'s "Crossing in 2000." You can also see some **Amorsolos**, **Arturo Luz** and **Botongs**.

DIPLOMATIC SWIRL

By Amiga

The exhibit was formally launched in November at the chair's gala for Ayala Museum partners and donors. The event was highlighted by the signing of a memorandum of agreement between Ayala Foundation chair **Jaime Zobel de Ayala** and Singapore Ambassador-at-large and chair of the National Heritage Board professor **Tommy Koh** (one of **Doris Ho**'s "favoritest" persons and one she thinks should be cloned. I agree).



SINGAPORE Ambassador-at-large and chair of the National Heritage Board professor Tommy Koh, Ayala Museum director Dr. Florina Capistrano-Baker, and Ayala Corp. and Ayala Foundation chair Jaime Zobel de Ayala view one of the 32 paintings by Filipino artists that are part of the homecoming exhibit "Crossings: Philippine Works from the Singapore Art Museum."

"Crossings" is the beginning of a five-year collaboration between the Ayala Foundation and Singapore's National Heritage Board that aims to strengthen cultural ties between the Philippines and Singapore.

French arrivals

French Ambassador **Renée Veyret** hosted a dinner reception in honor of two newly arrived members of her staff, **François Blamont**, counselor for cooperation and cultural affairs, and the very pretty and young **Claire Crochemore**, science attaché.

Manila designers, Metro and Tatler magazines may well have a new model in the brainy Madame Crochemore.

Feminism's centennial

Although she's busy preparing for the Centennial of the Feminist Movement of the Philippines next year (bet you didn't know there was such a move), chair **Narda Camacho** still found time to celebrate her birthday at the ballroom of the Manila Mandarin. Motif was environment.

Chito Macapagal of Unilever donated 30 coffee-table books about Laguna Lake and Pasig River that were given to guests who came in dresses and shirts with flora and fauna designs and even tiaras of leaves. Among the winners were Thai Ambassador **Busba Bunnag**, Brunei Ambassador **Munah Dato Elias**, **Silvia Schuff**, **Nena Casimiro**, **Alice Briones**, **Tereret Liboro**, **Ulrike Da Silva**, Honorary Consuls **Mellie Ablaza**, **Helen Ong**, **Fortune Ledesma** and **Evie Costa**, and many other "environmentalists."

Socio-Economic Planning Secretary **Romulo Neri**, **Gen. Victor Corpus**, sculptor **Ramon Orlina** and **Boysie Villavicencio** (who made Narda's dress for the 24th time) assisted 20 dancing instructors in making sure all the guests danced way past midnight.

Sorsogon City Mayor **Sally Lee** donated 40 baskets containing the famous Bicol *pili* nuts and the hostess gave away her manual on solid waste management.

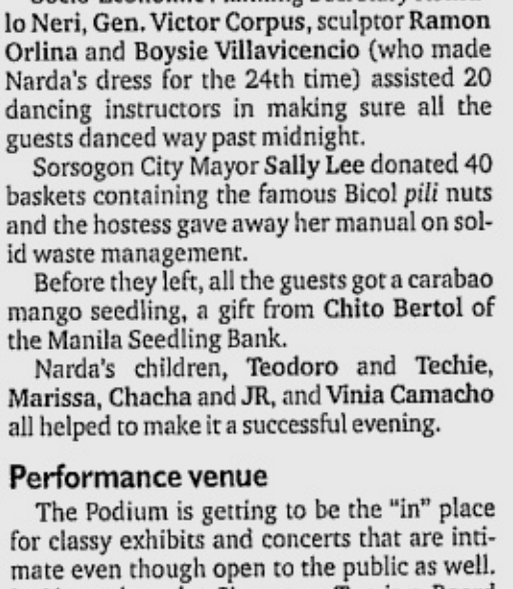
Before they left, all the guests got a carabao mango seedling, a gift from **Chito Bertol** of the Manila Seedling Bank.

Narda's children, **Teodoro** and **Techie**, **Marissa**, **Chacha** and **JR**, and **Vinia Camacho** all helped to make it a successful evening.

Performance venue

The Podium is getting to be the "in" place for classy exhibits and concerts that are intimate even though open to the public as well. In November, the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), with the Podium, celebrated the inauguration of its Manila office. There was a lot of hot curry from Banana Leaf. A wonderful dragon dance troupe performed followed by Chinese opera actors.

It seems there is enough air traffic between Manila and Singapore to warrant STB's opening an office here. This should make **Rita Dee** of Singapore Airlines and **Rocson Chang** of the Singapore Tourism Board beam this Christmas.



FRENCH Ambassador Renée Veyret, cultural counselor François Blamont and science attaché Claire Crochemore at the reception for the new French staff BETOY JOHNSON

MARISSA Camacho, Narda Camacho and Secretary of Finance Juanita Amatong

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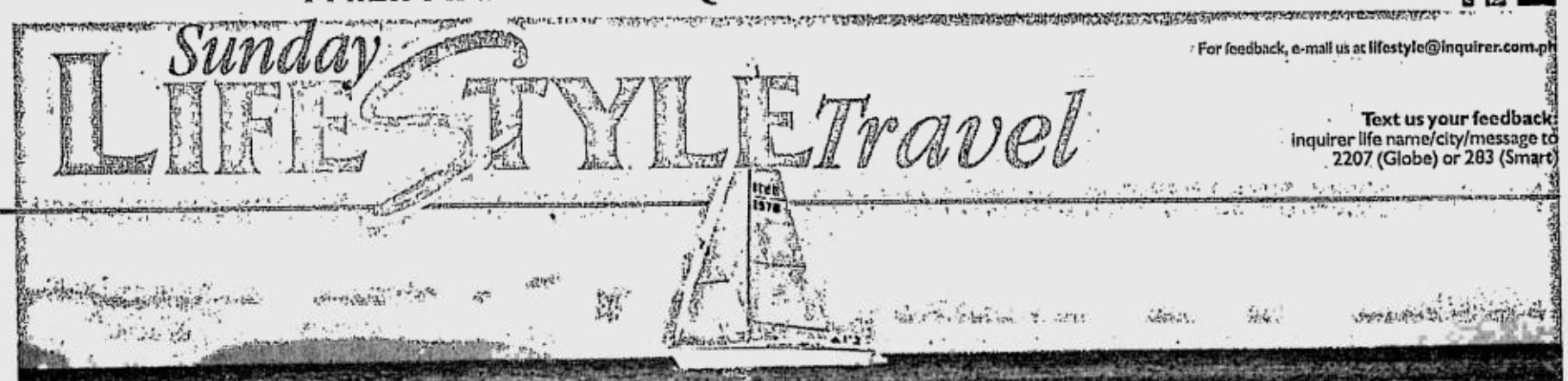

The world's best sandbox

When things go wrong in this country, one has only to go to the beach to be reminded that the Philippines will always be beautiful STORY ON PAGE H2

TRAVELBRIEFS

Snow fun at Mandarin

MANDARIN Oriental, Manila recently launched its Snow Fun at the Captain's Bar, in line with its White Christmas theme this Yuletide season.

Richwell Toy Trading provided the playground set enjoyed by the children, as they pranced in the snowfall made possible by a snow machine that produces biodegradable artificial snow.

Real-life snow will again fall on various parts of the hotel on Dec. 31, 7-10 p.m.

A life-sized Gingerbread House in the lobby as well as in the Alabang Town Center completes the White Christmas theme of the hotel until Dec. 31.

It features homemade pralines, Dresdener stollens, Swiss chocolate brunzli and traditional English fruit cake, duck liver pate, wines, Christmas cookies, cheeses, assorted cold cuts and Christmas hampers. Call 7508888.

Classic carol

EDSA Shangri-La transforms the classic carol into a visual treat for its guests this Christmas. Upon entering the hotel, guests are greeted by bright lights, the Nativity scene and rows of pine trees dressed up with radiant ornaments. The Lobby is adorned with large wreaths accented by grape ivy pines, pinecones and replicas of a partridge in a pear tree, turtledoves, French hens, calling birds, gold rings, geese-a-laying, swans-a-swimming, maids-a-milking, ladies dancing, lords-a-leaping, pipers piping and drummers drumming.

The Lobby Lounge displays a 25-ft tall pine tree decked with hundreds of metallic balls, musical instruments, stars, gold trimmings and carvings of gifts.

Special treats

THE WESTIN Philippine Plaza offers gift ideas like food and beverage certificates for dinner at the Poolside Barbecue, the Longest Buffet at Cafe Plaza, China Sea lauriat, Italian feast for five persons at Alfiere or five vouchers for two hours use with snacks at The Westin Kids Club. You may also give a Stay and Spa Room certificate that combines an overnight stay, buffet breakfast and choice of spa treatments for two.

At the Christmas Chocolate Collection Corner of Cafe Plaza, cakes, pralines, cookies and pastries are offered. The Westin can also customize hampers to suit your preference and discriminating tastes. Complete your holiday feasts with ham, turkey, salmon and prime ribs prepared in the traditional style of home-cooked meals. Call 5515555.

Party package

HOLIDAY Inn Galleria Manila offers the Penthouse Party Package. A group of 15 can enjoy the view of the metropolis from the 29th floor of the hotel while indulging in an assortment of hot and cold canapes. An hour-long open bar of local beer, soda, juices, standard drinks and house wines will add excitement to the event. The package comes with an overnight stay in the suite for four persons. Call 6349902/27.

Accommodation offers

THE PENINSULA Manila presents concerts, festive meals and accommodation offers. The highlights include: Yuletide Season Afternoon Tea until Dec. 31; Call 8872888/8103456.

Exhibit of dazzling Christmas trees

A BIG hit since it was first started in 1995, InterContinental Manila's annual Christmas Tree exhibit is a much-awaited event. Some of the best names in visual arts, fashion and design have accepted the hotel's invitation to make trees that would best mirror the spirit of Christmas while giving it their individual stamp of creativity. On display at the lobby until Jan. 6, 2005 are creations by Archie Chua, Racy Cuna, Gerry Gonzalez, Lito Perez, Barge Ramos, Pita Rufino and The Sari-Sari Group.

Special family Christmas packages

DAYS Hotel has a special Christmas menu package for families Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 in the Tagaytay, Batangas, Mactan Cebu and Subic branches.

Guests can enjoy their menu package for only P695 per person! The meal includes a salad or soup, a glass of wine, the main entrée and a dessert.

The Tagaytay, Batangas and Mactan Cebu branches also offer family Christmas packages for guests. Each package includes overnight stay in a Superior Room for two adults and two children with plated breakfast for only P3,800, as well as a Special Gift Certificate that entitles bearer to a 40-percent discount on published rates on their next visit.

Days Hotel Iloilo offers 50-percent off on all rooms plus free buffet breakfast until Jan. 2. Its special International Christmas buffet is available until today.

At Days Inn Suites Subic, two adults and two children can stay overnight in a Standard Room with full breakfast for P2,100. In Pahiyas de Lucban, they can stay in one of the bamboo cottages/villas for four persons (twin beds), with breakfast, for P1,650. Promo is good until Jan. 1. Call (033)3373297 in Iloilo and 8110809 in Manila.

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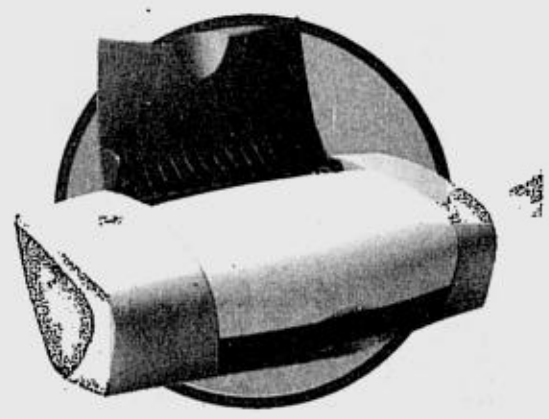

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Mechanics

1. Promo is available at the following SM Malls: Megamall, North Edsa, Southmall, Centerpoint and Lucena.
2. Promo period is from December 24, 2004 to January 9, 2005.
3. A lock-in period of 24 months or two (2) years is required for PLDT myDSL.
4. PLDT myDSL applicant should have a PLDT residential landline service.
5. Should the applicant decide to terminate the service within the lock-in period, a three (3) month MSF depending on subscribed PLDT myDSL plan plus the discount/savings shall be charged.
6. Get the FREE printer when you purchase a Black and White ink cartridge (P950) or a Colored ink cartridge (P1200). The printer can be claimed at the PLDT Business Office.

SEE FLYERS FOR DETAILS

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 3427, Series of 2004

PLDT

Fiesta is time for spiritual renewal

LED by the 2005 fiesta caretaker Dr. Gil Villacorte, the fiesta of San Ildefonso on Jan. 23 in San Ildefonso, Bulacan, will take the spiritual path, unlike in the past.

In preparation for the event, an Advent recollection was given by Msgr. Sabino Vengco. On Jan. 13, a motorcade will visit all barrios that received replicas of the saint to invite them to the Novena Masses. Novenas will begin at 5 a.m., Jan. 14 followed by a Mass at 6 a.m. officiated by Infanta Bishop Rolando Tria Tirona and other priests.

Celebrants in the subsequent Novena Masses are Msgr. Sabino Vengco, Msgr. Manuel Villaroman, Msgr. Andy Valera, Fr. Albert Suatengco, Fr. Pablo Legazpi, Fr. Nick Lalug, Fr. Allan Antonio, Fr. Johann Sebastian, Bishop Cirilo Almario and Malolos Bishop Jose Oliveros.

Working closely with the parish priest Fr. Rolando Ilustre Ang, San Ildefonso Mayor Edgardo Galvez and engineer Paul Cruz, who renovated 120 old churches in 1984, Dr. Villacorte is undertaking an extensive propagation of the devotion to San Ildefonso who is proving to be a miraculous intercessor.

By being caretaker, Dr. Villacorte achieved the dream of his late father Catalino "Ninoy" Villacorte who wanted the job in 1967, but was not chosen. He died nine months later.

The doctor also organized the *Hermandad de San Ildephonsus* composed of past presidents or caretakers of the fiesta. It would conduct projects for the church and propagate the devotion to San Ildefonso. The group wants to make the church a national shrine.

Members of the *hermandad* are: Herminio Cruz, Angel Caraballos, Enrique Viudez IV, Mario Lipana, Mamerto Francisco, Rodolfo Samaniego, Crisanto Francisco, Johnny Magbitang, Victoriano Cruz, Miguel Vinculado Jr., Rosendo Agulto, Fortunato Serrano, Ernesto Trinidad, Francisco Cuevas Jr., Jorge Toledo, Leandro Borja, engineer Paul Cruz, Angel Anarcon, Patricio Reyes Jr., Antonio Salao, Benjamin Luna, Romeo Veron, Fortunato Samaniego, Rolando Ileto, Benjamin Diaz and Albino de Guzman.

A nobleman

St. Ildephonsus (San Ildefonso) is highly regarded in Spain and closely associated with devotion to the Blessed Virgin which he fostered in his famous work concerning her perpetual virginity. Aside from the one already mentioned, he wrote a history of the Spanish Church during the first two-thirds of the seventh century, "Concerning Famous Men."

PURELY PERSONAL

Josephine Darang

St. Ildephonsus (San Ildefonso) is highly regarded in Spain and closely associated with devotion to the Blessed Virgin which he fostered in his famous work concerning her perpetual virginity

Miracles

Fr. Johann Sebastian, parish priest of the Sacred Heart Church in Pinaod, San Ildefonso, Bulacan, was conceived after his parents prayed to San Ildefonso and to the Mother of Perpetual Help. His mother had difficulty conceiving. He is an only child.

Lola Mercedes Vanguardia Cruz, mother of Paul Cruz, said when her husband Benjamin was asked to be president of the 1981 fiesta they said "yes", even if they had no money, because no one should refuse the saint. Their friends and neighbors helped them raise the money.

Several days after the fiesta, their son Paul, who finished industrial engineering in Mapua, left to work in Saudi Arabia. In thanksgiving for all God's blessings through San Ildefonso, Paul is now restoring the bell tower in time for the fiesta.

Doctors who are devotees of the saint are heading a medical mission as part of the fiesta. They are Drs. Florida Ileto and Pag-asa Guanlao.

There will be a *serenata* to the Virgin on Jan. 22. Bishop Oliveros will say the fiesta Mass at 9 a.m. on Jan. 23. Msgr. Sabino Vengco's Mass will be aired over GMA-7 at 5 a.m. on Jan. 23. Those who wish for prayer *estampitas* can write to me. Please enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Procession theme

The procession will be at 8 p.m. on Jan. 23. Devotees are requested to answer San Ildefonso's request: "My children, I will pass by your house. Light my path and place your intention at my feet or whisper your prayer to me."

Counting our blessings

Now that some of us wake up at 3 a.m. (because we are growing old, they say, we have more time to count our blessings, despite the negative things happening now), here are a few things that help us forget the bad things in life: 1) the "Practical Cook" show of Nancy Reyes on ABC-5 at 9 a.m. every Sunday; 2) the fruit cake of Judy Lao; and 3) the presence of Kythe, Inc., which has made itself responsible for the psycho-social care of hospitalized children, especially the poor. For information on how to help, call Girlie Garcia at 9226370 or 9280611.

New Year rituals

With the New Year coming, it is time to give old clothes and shoes to charitable organizations of your choice. Rearrange the furniture. Clear the table for vases of daisies, find 12 kinds of fruits and put them on the table on New Year's Eve, wear a polka-dotted blouse or shirt to attract prosperity, and make it a New Year's resolution to go to Holy Mass every Sunday, if you have been negligent before.

And if you want to know your fortune, visit Nestor Argelio, the psychic at Tempura Misono at the Hyatt Hotel or text him 0919-5854863.

Albert and angels

Boy Ponce who was Albert Seeland's classmate in Malate School dreamt that Albert was with Mama Mary and the angels. Albert was wearing a chef's uniform. Albert died Dec. 24, 2000. To us, his friends, he was part of our Christmases and New Years, so we ask him to pray for us.

Our friends Pando Manipon and Oskar Peralta did the *belen* of Harrison Plaza Chapel and the Sacred Heart Parish in Dao St., Makati, respectively. God gave them so much talent that they have to use it for His greater glory.

A blessed New Year to all!

SAN Ildefonso, patron saint of San Ildefonso, Bulacan, marks feast day on Jan. 23.

DR. Gil Villacorte, caretaker of San Ildefonso Fiesta 2005, leads spiritual renewal.

ENGINEER Paul Cruz became fiesta caretaker in 1985, to say 'thank you' for his blessings.

SUNDAY CROSSWORD

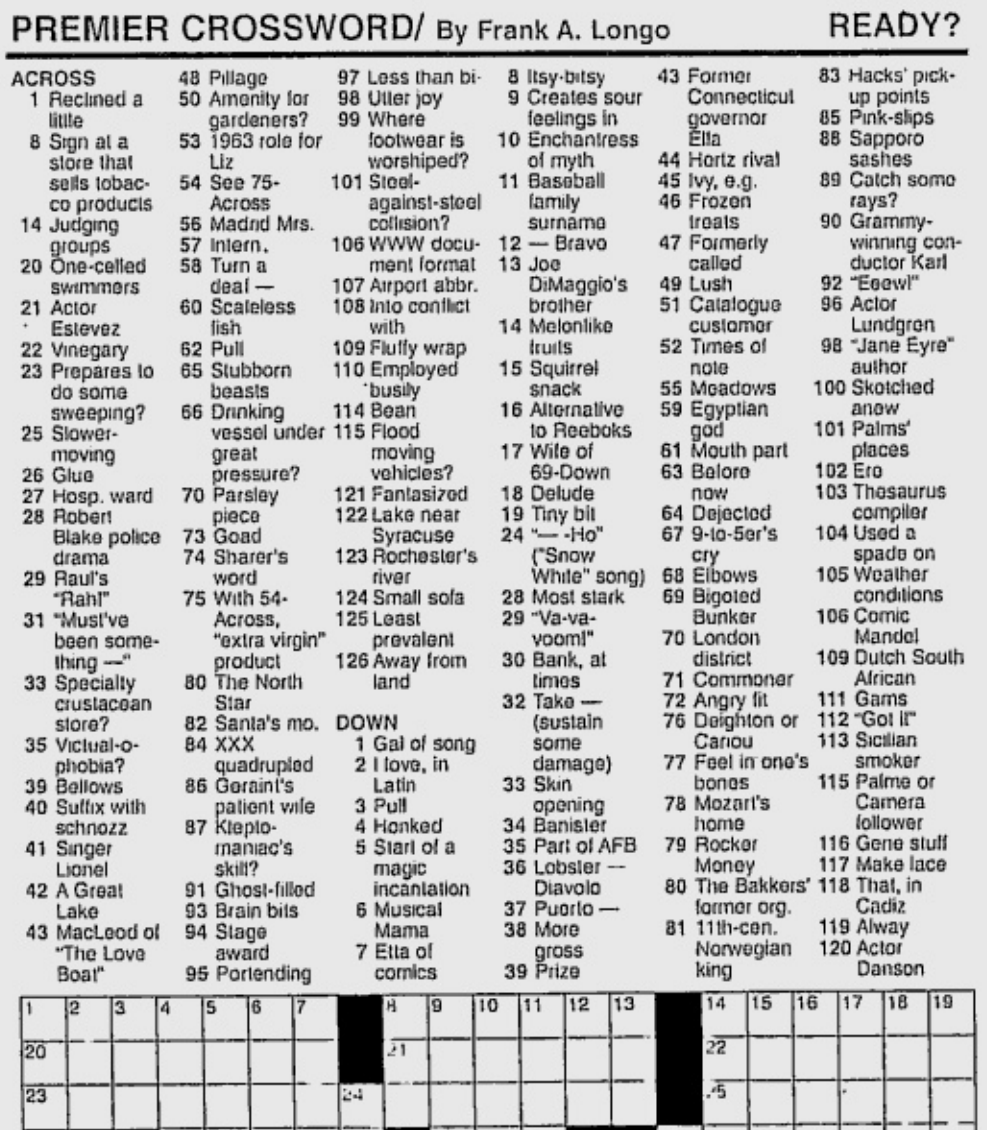
PREMIER CROSSWORD/ By Frank A. Longo — **READY?**

ACROSS

1 Reclined a little
8 Sign at a store that sells tobacco products
14 Judging groups
20 One-celled swimmers
21 Actor Estevez
22 Vinegary
23 Prepares to do some sweeping?
25 Slower-moving
26 Glue
27 Hosp. ward
28 Robert Blake police drama
29 Raul's "Rahl"
31 "Must've been something —"
33 Specialty crustacean store?
35 Victual-o-phobia?
39 Bellows
40 Suffix with schnozz
41 Singer Lionel
42 A Great Lake
43 MacLeod of "The Love Boat"
48 Pillage
50 Amenity for gardeners?
53 1963 role for Liz
54 See 75-Across
56 Madrid Mrs.
57 Intern.
58 Turn a deaf —
60 Scaleless fish
62 Pull
65 Stubborn beasts
66 Drinking vessel under great pressure?
70 Parsley piece
73 Goad
74 Sharer's word
75 With 54-Across, "extra virgin" product
80 The North Star
82 Santa's mo.
84 XXX quadrupled
86 Geraint's patient wife
87 Kleptomaniac's skill?
91 Ghost-filled
93 Brain bits
94 Stage award
95 Portending
97 Less than bi-
98 Utter joy
99 Where footwear is worshiped?
101 Steel-against-steel collision?
106 WWW document format
107 Airport abbr.
108 Into conflict with
109 Fluffy wrap
110 Employed busily
114 Bean
115 Flood moving vehicles?
121 Fantasized
122 Lake near Syracuse
123 Rochester's river
124 Small sofa
125 Least prevalent
126 Away from land

DOWN

1 Gal of song
2 I love, in Latin
3 Pull
4 Honked
5 Start of a magic incantation
6 Musical Mama
7 Etta of comics
8 Itsy-bitsy
9 Creates sour feelings in
10 Enchantress of myth
11 Baseball family surname
12 — Bravo
13 Joe DiMaggio's brother
14 Melonlike fruits
15 Squirrel snack
16 Alternative to Reeboks
17 Wife of 69-Down
18 Delude
19 Tiny bit
24 "— -Ho" ("Snow White" song)
28 Most stark
29 "Va-va-voom!"
30 Bank, at times
32 Take — (sustain some damage)
33 Skin opening
34 Banister
35 Part of AFB
36 Lobster — Diavolo
37 Puerto —
38 More gross
39 Prize
43 Former Connecticut governor Ella
44 Hertz rival
45 Ivy, e.g.
46 Frozen treats
47 Formerly called
49 Lush
51 Catalogue customer
52 Times of note
55 Meadows
59 Egyptian god
61 Mouth part
63 Before now
64 Dejected
67 9-to-5er's cry
68 Elbows
69 Bigoted Bunker
70 London district
71 Commoner
72 Angry fit
76 Deighton or Cariou
77 Feel in one's bones
78 Mozart's home
79 Rocker Money
80 The Bakkers' former org.
81 11th-cen. Norwegian king
83 Hacks' pick-up points
85 Pink-slips
88 Sapporo sashes
89 Catch some rays?
90 Grammy-winning conductor Karl
92 "Eeew!"
96 Actor Lundgren
98 "Jane Eyre" author
100 Sketched anew
101 Palms' places
102 Era
103 Thesaurus compiler
104 Used a spade on
105 Weather conditions
106 Comic Mandel
109 Dutch South African
111 Gams
112 "Got it"
113 Sicilian smoker
115 Palme or Camera follower
116 Gene stuff
117 Make lace
118 That, in Cadiz
119 Alway
120 Actor Danson



answer on page C3

Ménage à trois isn't her game

EMILY'S POST

Emily A. Marcelo

DEAR Emily,

I am a 38-year-old survivor of an annulled marriage and I have two sons. I fell in love with a policeman, single, and nine years younger than me. Six months into our relationship, he admitted to having a girlfriend a few months before he met me.

This explained the questionable whereabouts and unanswered text messages and cell phone calls for three to four days. He said he's "unreachable" during police "operations." (Though he said) he loved me more than the other woman, he vaguely hinted I (should) accept the situation (as) "there are only two" of us!

I don't nag and I don't put pressure on him. In fact, I'm so cool and relaxed. He told me to wait awhile because he could not separate from the other woman immediately. The other woman was "separated," he said. But I heard from a common friend that the husband was an overseas Filipino worker.

He said the other woman paid "our" boyfriend's rent, car expenses and daily allowance. I never did that. The other woman started to befriend me, but (apparently she) just wanted to monitor the whereabouts of our boyfriend. I stayed away from her when I found out she had been trying to destroy me all this time.

(I had this) relationship for a year and five months. Though I still love him so much, I've (gotten) out of the nightmare. I've made up my mind that those two will not hurt me anymore.

He sends text messages and invites me out, but I make excuses not to see him. I pray and hope that I can find somebody who's worthy of my love and sincerity.

ROSEVINNE

Haven't you had enough trauma and learned plenty of lessons from your annulment to gauge guys like this policeman? Methinks you've become a glutton for pain, considering you even "shared" him with another woman for a while.

But who can blame you? Everyone becomes a fool when it comes to love. Everyone—from the intellectually superior to the intellectually challenged—has fallen victim to love. As the saying goes, "There's none so blind as those who refuse to see." Why? Because love is both a hunger and an addiction.

Accept that phase as part of your learning process. But get out of that cycle of failures in your relationships—fast! Hone your instincts to detect deceit and lies. It's a jungle out there and predators are waiting to pounce on vulnerable women—and they're aplenty!

Move on, move on and don't look back! It's hard but you've got to start somewhere.

Two-week romance

I am a 29-year-old manager in a call center. I met Jun a month ago while I was having my car cleaned. He asked about my car. Being a car buff myself, we had a good conversation. He (got) my business card.

Fifteen minutes after we parted, he called my cell phone and asked me to go out with him. I agreed to meet him that weekend. He then constantly called and sent text messages... that (whole) week. He was the something I'd been missing since I broke up with my ex a year ago.

He is the son of the owner of a big company and he is two years younger than me. We talked for hours that day and I found him very likable. We were "on" two days after that meeting. I felt alive again barely two weeks after meeting him.

When we met again, he said he'd like to meet my parents that weekend and would call to confirm the time. I waited and waited and waited. He never called and he never came. I realized I'd been had.

I didn't hear from him for a week. When he finally sent a text message, I ignored it. He called that same day as if nothing happened. I told him that if he didn't have the right intentions then he should not call or text me again.

He said he could explain, but I refused to listen to him. He wanted a second chance.

I still like him but I don't know if I can trust him. He still sends text messages and calls, but I refuse to be made a fool again.

I keep thinking of and hanging on to the special two weeks we had. Deep inside I really want to know him better. Do I use my head this time or give him another chance? I'm so confused.

MAY

You met, you talked, you went steady—all in a span of two days. He was like a window shopper—he liked what he saw, went in, looked at it up close, had enough of it after a while, and left. Can't blame the guy for being what he is. And you were so gullible to think he liked you enough to have you wrapped up and brought home. Nah!

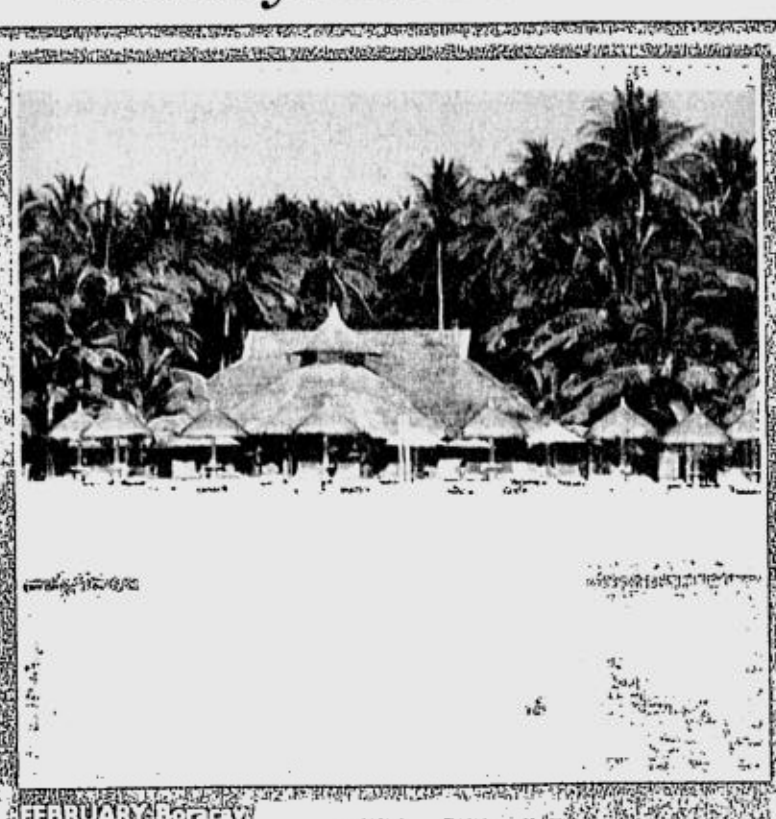
Sure, society is very permissive these days. Sure, anything goes among young people. But it is inherent in men... It is the nature of man—to hunt, and they love the thrill of it. The harder it is to catch the prey, the sweeter the triumph is. You were a sitting duck. You amused him for a while, then he moved on.

Don't romanticize the two weeks you "had" with him. C'mon. You had nothing! You two played the flirting game with words—nice words, sexy words, thrilling words but words are just like soapsuds. They sparkle, they mesmerize, but they're blown away by the wind never to be seen again. You were foolish enough to paint an idyllic picture with his beautiful soapsuds.

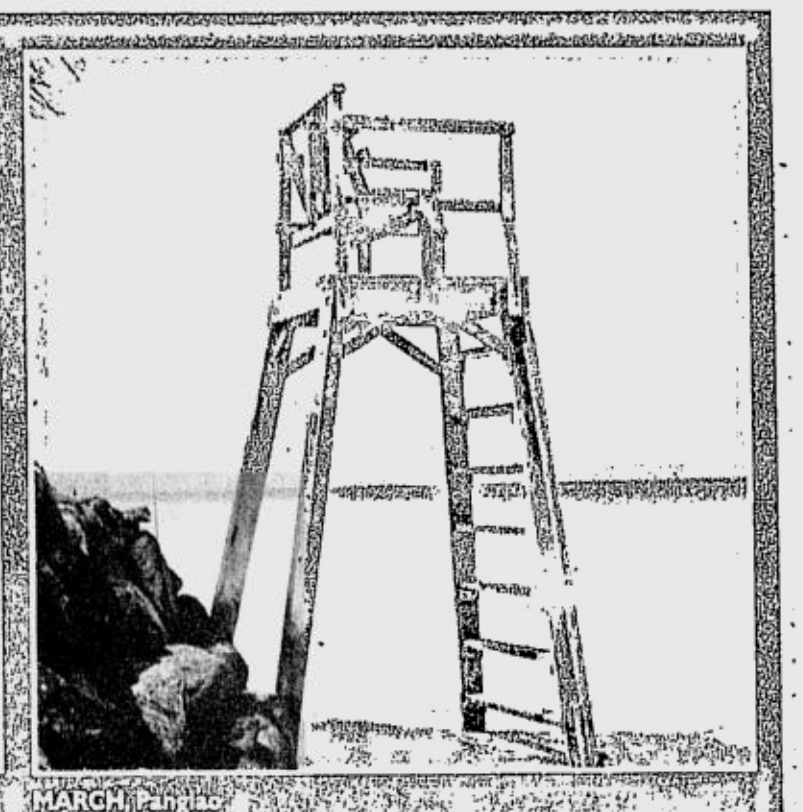
Forget him because he is absolutely not in your emotional wavelength. Think of him as just a dream, a nice one if you like. You're awake now and you're back to reality. And reality bites.

E-mail the author at emarcelo@inquirer.com.ph, subject: Lifestyle, or send your letters to the Inquirer office. Listen to Ms Marcelo co-host the program "Kalikasan Vigilante," 7:15- 8:30 p.m., Monday-Friday, dwBR 104.3 FM.

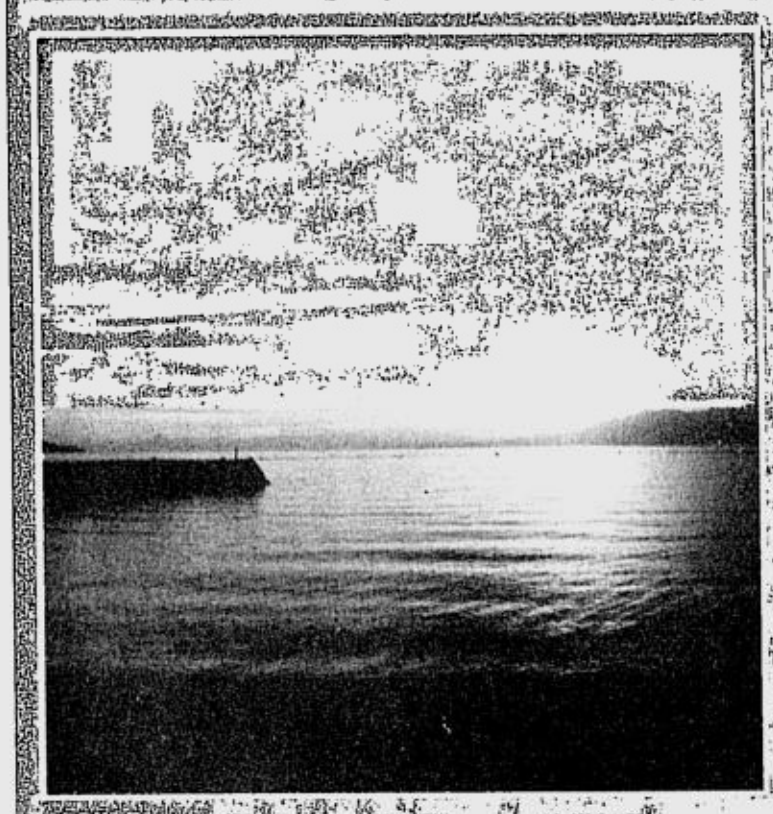
JANUARY Palawan



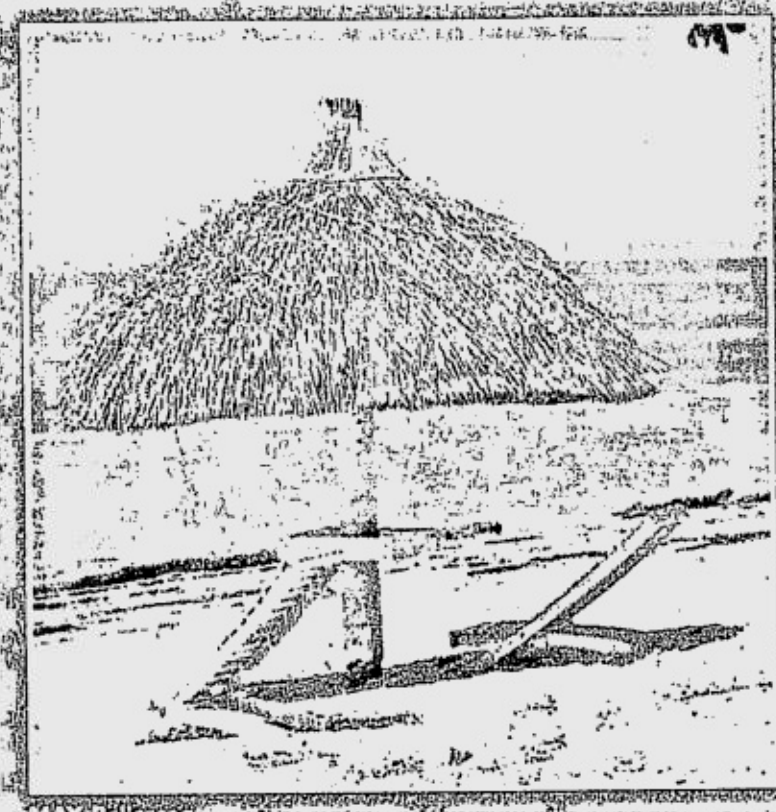
FEBRUARY Boracay



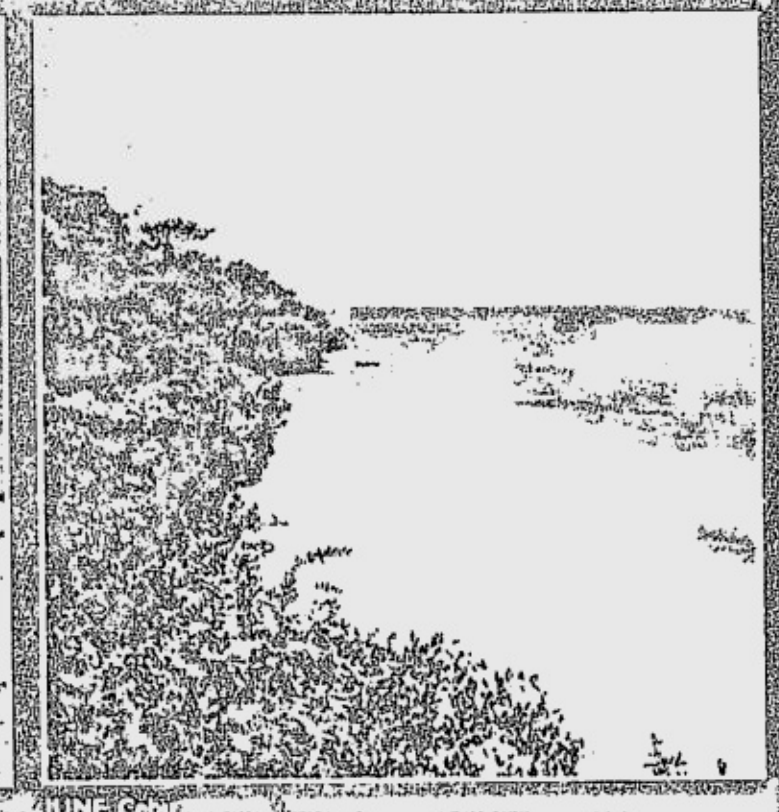
MARCH Tañon



APRIL Davao



MAY Bicol



JUNE Cebu

The world's best sandbox

Text and photos by Butch Jimenez
Contributor

I WANT my kids to grow up knowing that the Philippines is a beautiful country. Not just because they are Filipinos, but because it really is a beautiful country.

And if there's one thing the Philippines can be proud of, it's her beaches. No doubt, the Philippines is the world's best sandbox.

Every year, we set out for some of the beaches our country is blessed with. And, always, I walk around with my digital camera and try to document their natural beauty.

One thing I like about photography is pictures are like fingerprints or snowflakes... each one is unique, and can never be repeated. Pictures may look similar, but somehow never exactly the same.

For some reason, God paints His landscape, His sky, His lighting, His wave, different every second.

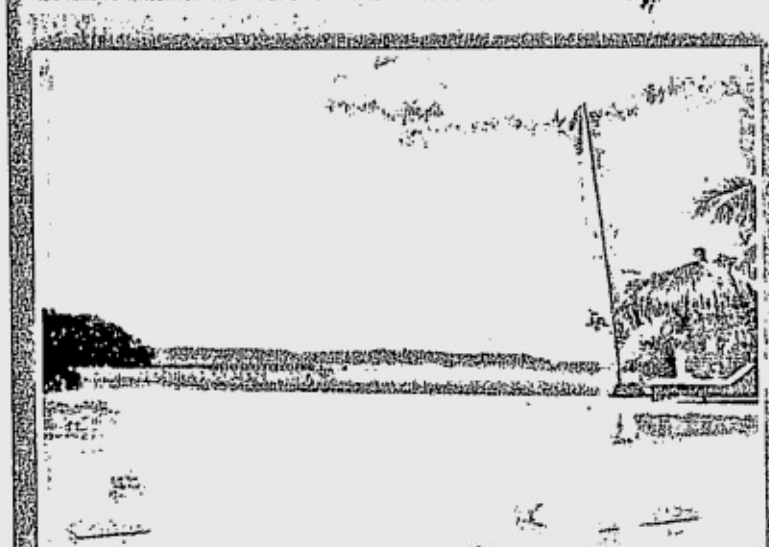
I've made a calendar to show the beauty of our country to those who have not yet realized how wonderful she is.

The pictures in the calendar capture some of the beaches we visited this year—a year-round reminder of how gorgeous the Philippines is.

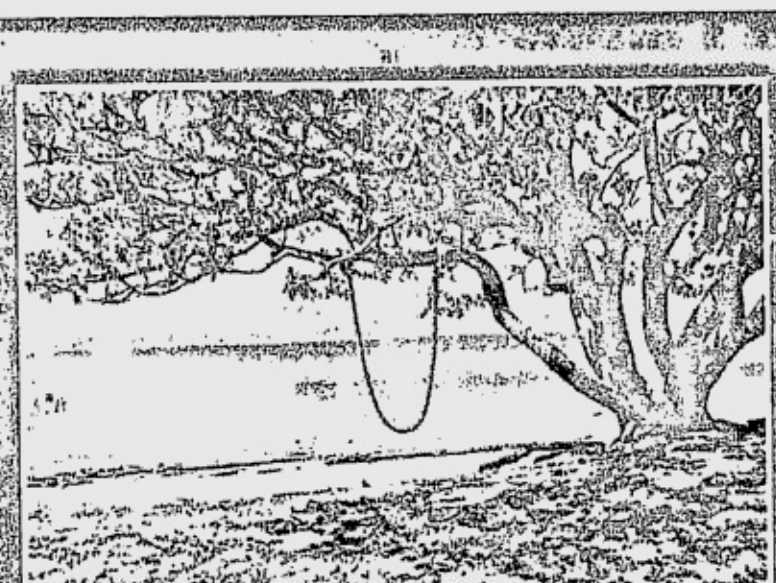
When trouble besets our nation, I just head for the beach. Somehow, it helps me realize that no matter what, the Philippines is a beautiful country.

If you want a copy of the calendar, please e-mail me at butchgjimenez@yahoo.com. The calendar is free, though I will ask you to please tell everybody that if he or she is looking for the world's best sandbox, you're living in it.

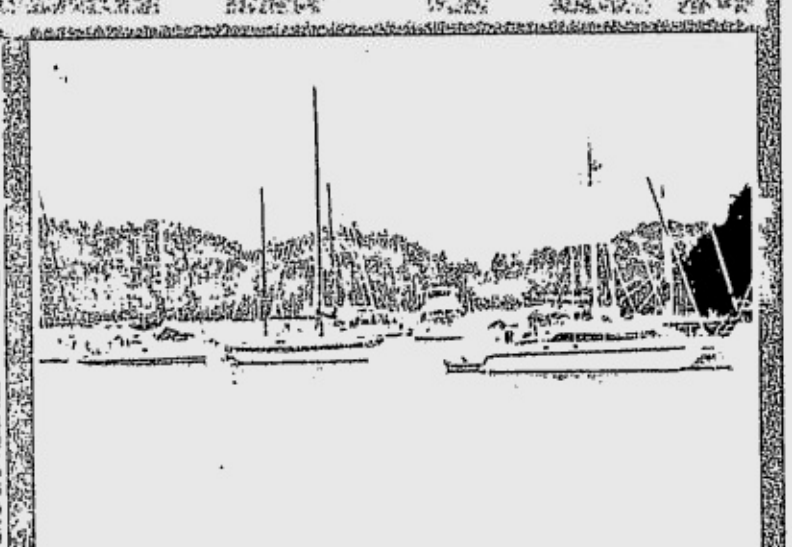
THE AUTHOR with his family at Pearl Farm, Davao



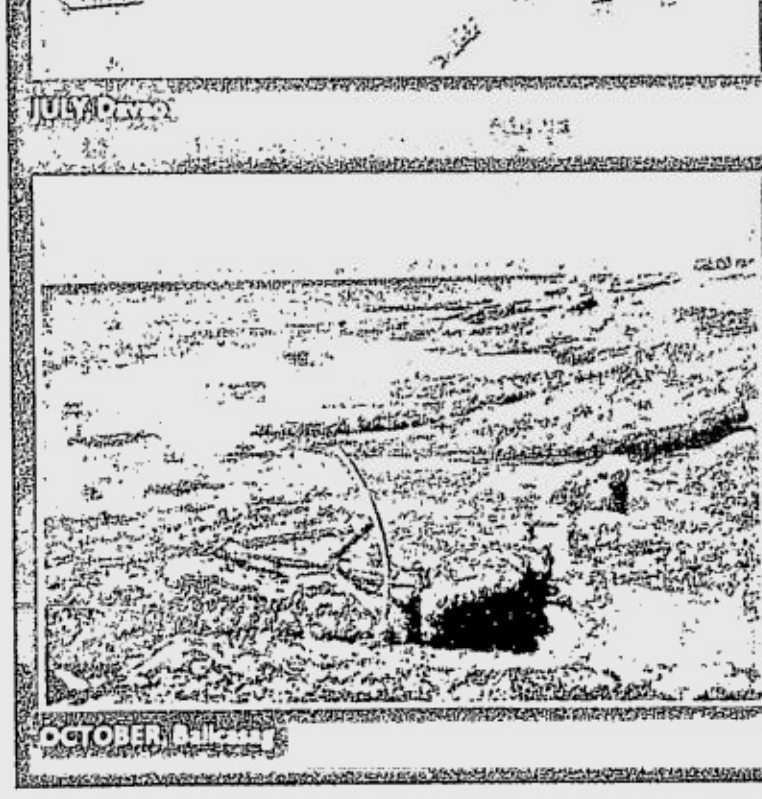
JULY Davao



AUGUST Bohol

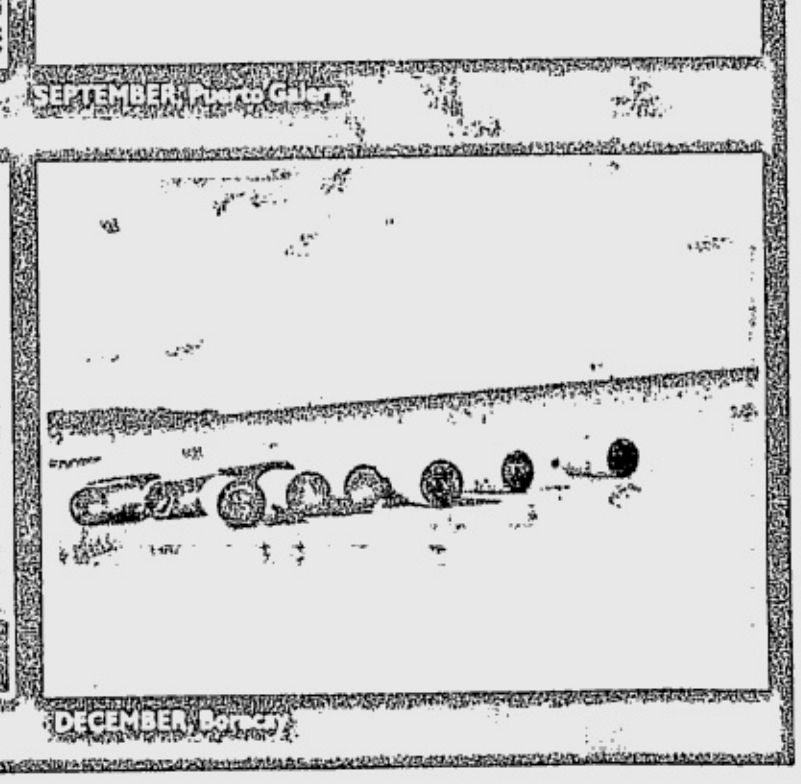


SEPTEMBER Pearl Farm, Davao



OCTOBER Palawan

NOVEMBER Panglao



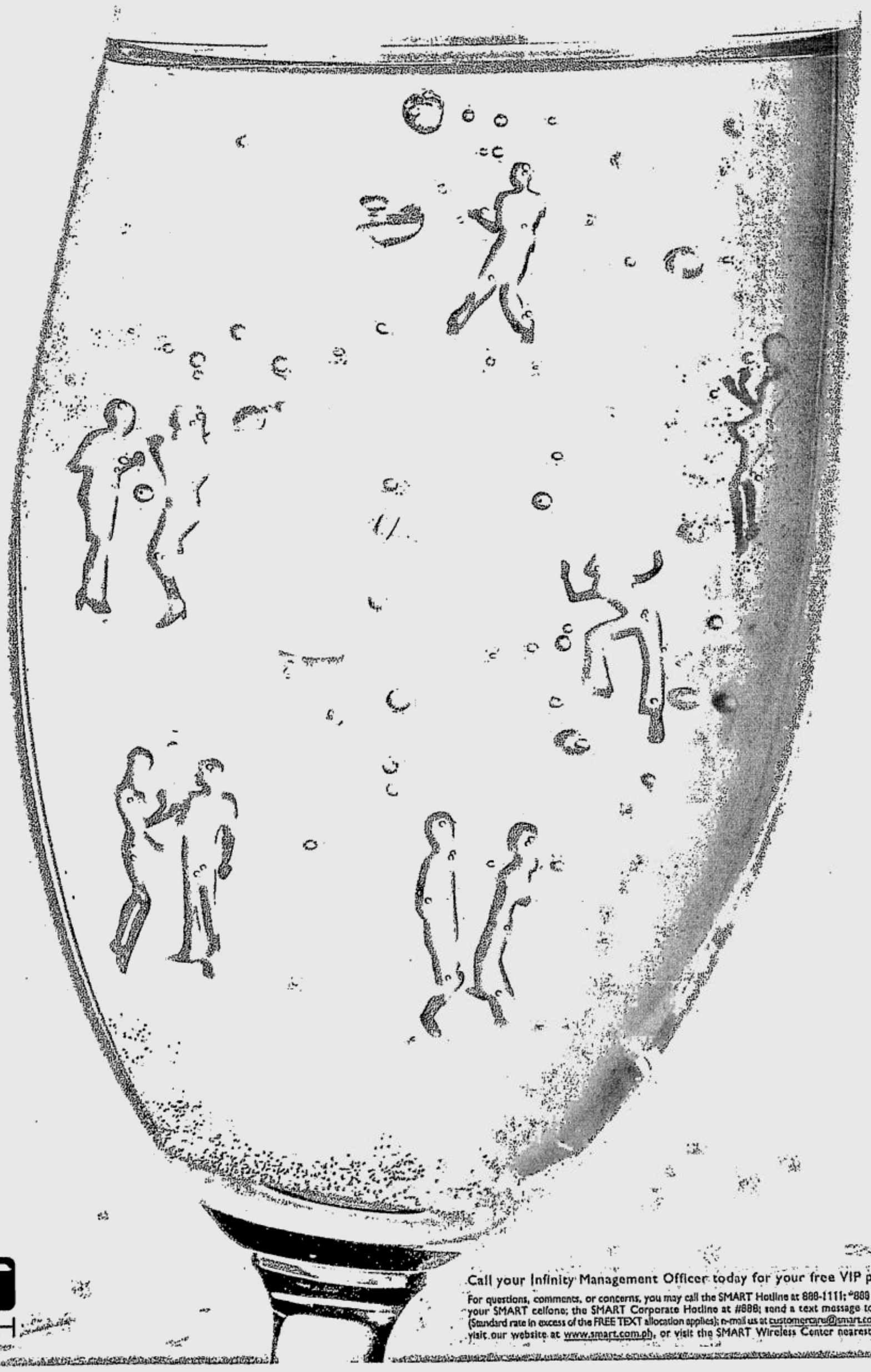
DECEMBER Boracay

SMART Infinity
Enjoy life's best

Celebrate New Year's Eve with an exclusive party for SMART INFINITY subscribers.

PASEO UNO, Mandarin Oriental Hotel with BIG FISH featuring LOUNGE.
Groove to the music of guest DJs – Elian Habayeb, Benjo Marquez and Johnboy.
Free-flowing Moet and Chandon champagnes exclusive for SMART Infinity subscribers.

January 1, 2005, Midnight onwards.



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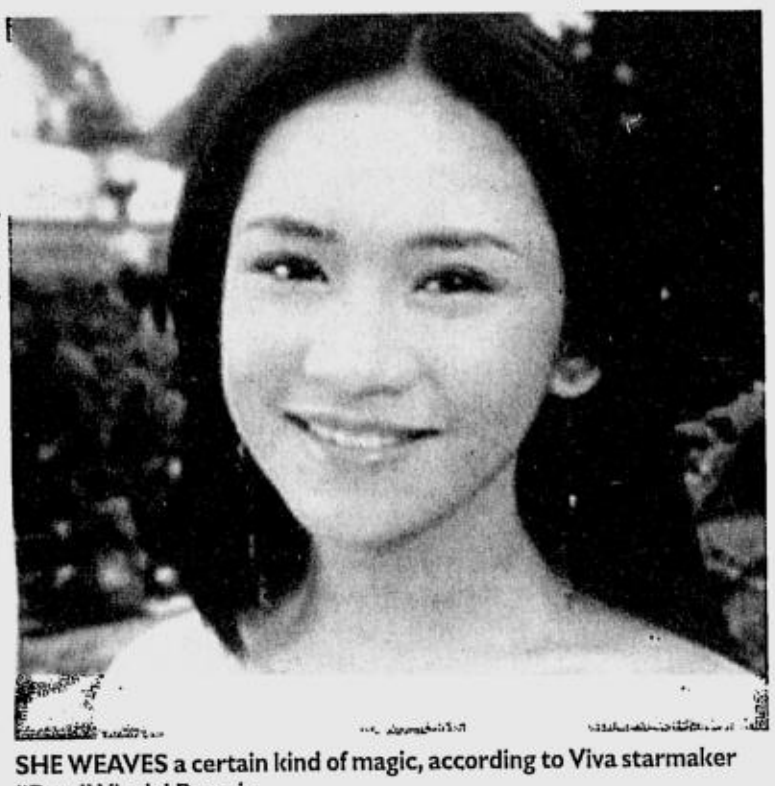


SHE WEAVES a certain kind of magic, according to Viva starmaker "Boss" Vic del Rosario.

Sarah, phenomenal popstar

SHE'S only 16, but Sarah Geronimo is already a certified compleat entertainer.

She has proven it as the star of "Sarah: The Teen Princess," which ran for two seasons on ABS-CBN. In that teleseries, Sarah's versatility shone—she danced, sang and did heavy drama, and achieved it all with flying colors.

She even did comedy, appearing as a guest on "OK Fine Whatever," with mainstays Aga Muhlach, Bayani Agbayani and Edu Manzano.

Sarah also hosted "Morning Star" along with friends and fellow champions Mark Bautista, Rachelle Ann Go, Christian Bautista and Erik Santos. She also does hosting chores on "Asap Mania."

But beyond acting and hosting, Sarah is first of all a singer. Her very first album, "Popstar" from Viva Records, turned platinum in just a few months. It also produced several hits, including "Forever's Not Enough" and "To Love You More."

Even before her second album, "Sweet Sixteen," was released, its carrier single, "How Could You Say You Love Me," was already No. 1 on FM stations and music video channels. A month later, "Sweet Sixteen" was already a gold album.

Sarah and her gang have performed thrice at the Araneta Coliseum. Their "Night of the Champions" concert was such a hit it was staged a second time. Because it was taped and shown on ABS-CBN's The Filipino Channel, the group of champions was readily booked for a US tour that covered eight states.

Viva Boss Vic del Rosario himself was witness to the enthusiastic reception that Sarah received at every stop of the tour. Boss Vic acknowledged that The Filipino Channel helped a lot in introducing Sarah to Filipino audiences in the US.

Sarah capped 2004 with several awards from the Aliw and Awit awards for her first album. She was Aliw's Most Promising Female Artist.

Sarah also brought home Awit Awards for Best New Female Recording Artist for "Forever's Not Enough" and Best Dance Song for "Sa Iyo."

She has just renewed her contract as an endorser of Jollibee. She also endorses Charmee and, more recently, Pacific Internet Surf Maxx which maintains her official website—sarahgeronimo.com.ph.

Before the year ends, her fans will see Sarah in the movie "Lastikman," Viva Films' entry in the Metro Manila Film Festival.

Sarah stars opposite Mark Bautista, who is in the title role. The movie also features Cherie Gil, John Estrada, Danilo Barrios, Elizabeth Oropesa and Tuesday Vargas, Sen. Bong Revilla as Captain Barbell, Anne Curtis as Dyesebel and Joel Torre as Lastikman's father.

"Lastikman" is directed by Mac Alejardre, who also directed "Captain Barbell."

What makes Sarah's rise in show biz so phenomenal?

"She weaves a certain kind of magic that captivates her audience," says Boss Vic. "You should see the fans practically step on one another just to get close to her."

No Christmas mega-movie for Hollywood

WANTED: A smash hit like last year's "Lord of the Rings: Return of the King"

LOS ANGELES—Hollywood's studios are expected to rake in a possibly record $9.4 billion at domestic box offices this year, but the lack of a Christmas season smash like last year's final "Lord of the Rings" film will crimp overall ticket sales.

The estimated box-office figure for the United States and Canada should beat 2003's $9.27 billion by about 1.4 percent, and may squeak by 2002's record $9.3 billion, according to Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc., a box-office tracking service.

But admissions, or the number of tickets actually sold, are seen falling to roughly 1.5 billion from 1.53 billion last year and 1.6 billion in 2002.

The higher box-office take is being fueled by a rise in average ticket prices, which Exhibitor Relations president Paul Dergarabedian said may wind up between $6.10 and $6.25 per ticket in 2004, up from $6.03 in 2003 and $5.80 in 2002.

Art-house fare

"Many of the films that did well (with audiences) are not necessarily the films that made a lot of money," said Dergarabedian, noting art-house fare like "Napoleon Dynamite" and the current critical hit "Sideways."

He added that two big hits, "The Passion of the Christ" and "Fahrenheit 9/11," were released outside the major studios, where the $100 million-plus blockbusters normally come from.

SHOW STOPPER

The holidays, in which 20 percent of total annual ticket sales are made, has many crowd pleasers but lacks a mega-movie like 2003's "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King," which went on to win an Oscar for best picture.

Sony Pictures Entertainment, a unit of Japanese electronics maker Sony Corp., is on the way to ending the year at No. 1 in domestic market share with more than $1.3 billion at box offices. Next is Time Warner Inc.'s Warner Bros. with $1.25 billion, according to studio estimates.

No. 1 again

It is the second time in three years Sony has been No. 1 and the third straight year of a $1 billion-plus box office. It is Warner's fourth straight year of $1 billion-plus in sales.

Sony had a combination of big-budget hits like "Spider-Man 2" and low-budget stars such as horror flick "The Grudge," which cost Sony $10 million and racked up $110 million.

"We had a really diverse slate this year, and . . . certainly we pulled off one of the surprises with 'Grudge,'" said Jeff Blake, Sony Pictures Entertainment vice chair.

Funding movies at the high and low ends of the cost range—avoiding the middle—marks a trend of recent years that studio executives expect will continue in 2005.

"Spider-Man 2" was the No. 2 US film of 2004 with $373 million in domestic ticket sales, behind $436 million for DreamWorks Animation's "Shrek 2."

Rounding out the top five were "Passion" with $370 million, Warner Bros.' "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban" with $249 million and Disney/Pixar's "The Incredibles" at $236 million and climbing.

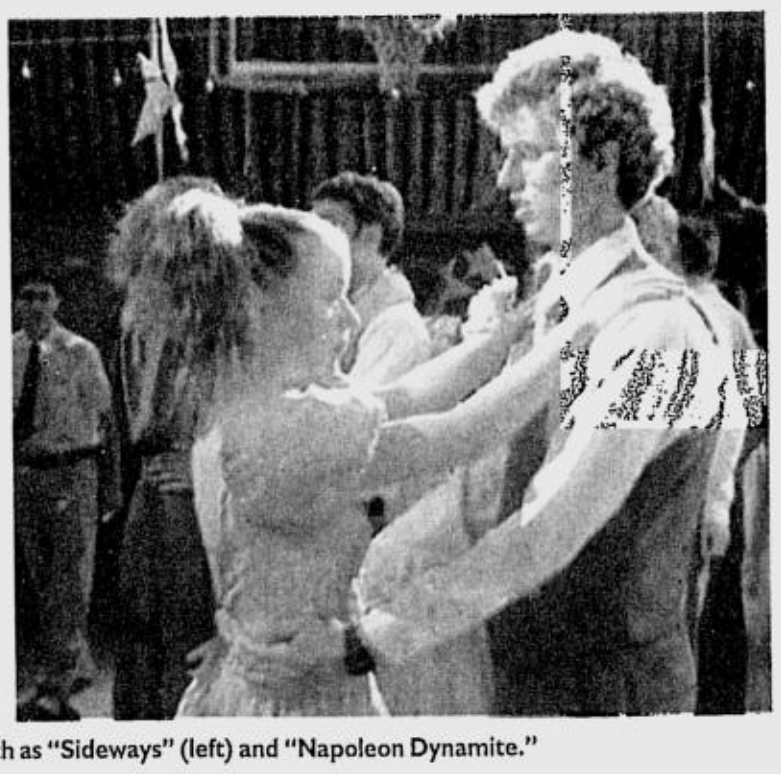
$150M-$200M

After a tough start with "The Alamo," Disney will likely end at No. 3 in market share with $1.1 billion, crossing the $1-billion threshold for the ninth time in 11 years.

The year also was marked by production budgets for major films in the $150-million to $200-million range, and studio executives expect high costs to continue into 2005.

Other events to look for in 2005 will be a new studio chief at Viacom Inc.'s Paramount Pictures, a new film distribution partner for one-time Disney ally Pixar Animation Studios Inc., and the way in which a Sony-led investor group plans to run Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Inc.

Hollywood's other major studios include Universal Pictures, owned by General Electric Co. and France's Vivendi Universal, as well as Twentieth Century Fox, controlled by News Corp. Inc. A major independent is Lions Gate Entertainment Corp. Reuters



PRICELESS PRAISE. Many movies that audiences liked did not exactly make a lot of money, such as "Sideways" (left) and "Napoleon Dynamite."

Busloads of kids, parents visit scene of Michael Jackson 'lewd acts'

JACKSON

LOS ANGELES— Dozens of children visited Michael Jackson's Neverland Valley Ranch last week at the invitation of the pop superstar who is awaiting trial on child molestation charges.

Three buses containing mostly grade-school children and some parents as well as five minivans drove through the gates of Jackson's sprawling estate in the foothills above Santa Barbara, California, Reuters photographers said.

It was unclear where the children had come from.

Jackson's spokeswoman said on Thursday such invitations were regularly extended to groups including churches.

A Reuters photographer said the children appeared excited and happy and that one mother said she expected to spend the day at Neverland, which has theme-park style rides, a miniature train and a small zoo.

It was not known whether Jackson, 46, was at the event or would meet his guests.

The entertainer is free on bail awaiting trial set for late January on a 10-count indictment of child molestation. Jackson has pleaded innocent.

Prosecutors say that it was at Neverland, almost two years ago, that Jackson plied a boy with alcohol, engaged in "lewd acts" with him, then conspired with his staff to cover up his misdeeds.

Police have raided the ranch twice looking for evidence to use at trial.

Jackson has frequently opened his home to children and other visitors. He threw a party there in December 2003 for about 300 well-wishers, supporters and family friends a month after his arrest. *Reuters*

KIDDIE TIME. "Always savor moments with your kids," says Maricel on "Parenting Roadshow," a series of seminars. "Have fun while learning with them."

Maricel Laxa teaches parenting without pain

FOR MARICEL Laxa-Pangilinan, one of the most challenging aspects of parenting is molding children into responsible individuals that embody good values. Crucial in achieving this is devoting quality time to them.

Balancing time can be especially tough for working parents like Maricel—mother of four, celebrity, newspaper columnist, author of parenting books, seminar/training resource person, and product endorser.

"We accept it as a reality that our time will be consumed by other things," she says. "So we set priorities, but on top of all these should be our family."

Maricel believes that the most efficient way to teach children is by consistent example; and that the values you want to inculcate in them are best imbibed during moments of togetherness.

Thus, no matter how busy Maricel and her husband Anthony are, they always find time to be with their kids Ella, Donny, Hannah, and Benjamin. They also devote time to nurturing their relationship as a couple. By being involved in their kids' world, Maricel explains, parents will understand them and better relate to them.

Optimum health

Involvement also helps Maricel ensure that her kids' every need is met. She keeps them fit and healthy because she believes that optimum health is the foundation of a fruitful life. If her kids experience pain or fever, she is always close by, knowing that these may just be symptoms of more serious illnesses. In treating pain and fever, Maricel says she trusts only Biogesic for Kids, a product that she endorses.

"It is fast-acting," she says.

With the children free from sundry aches, the family is able to share quality time and enjoy doing things together. Maricel advises parents: "Always savor moments with your kids. Have fun while learning with them. This is a good way to teach them to be open to life and to not be afraid of making mistakes."

Maricel shared more parenting tips during the recently concluded "Parenting Roadshow," a series of seminars conducted by Biogesic for Kids and The Parenting Company.

The project ran from October till early this month, touring seven schools across Metro Manila, educating parents on various subjects, including communication that promotes learning and builds self-esteem, and basic first aid for children.

Resource speakers were Maricel and Anthony, The Parenting Company's health and medical consultant Dr. Donna Simpao, and retreat and seminar counselor Felichi Buizon.

SHOW TIME

'Party @ d Pond' in Cavite

THE 888 Fishing Place Bar and Restaurant in Binakayan, Kawit, Cavite, will stage a yearender party on Dec. 29 starting at 7 p.m.

The show bands Feedback and Revive will lead the non-stop "Party @ d Pond." The party will be powered by Musak Pro Mobile System and sponsored by Malvar Supremarket.

Tickets are at P100.

888Fishing Place for fishing enthusiasts is located on Covelandia Road in Binakayan, Kawit, only about 18 km from Manila.

For reservation, call (046) 434-0803.

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MARS RAVELO'S LASTIKMAN UNANG BANAT

SARAH GERONIMO MARK BAUTISTA

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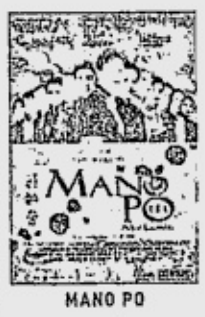
ENTENG KABISOTE

SO HAPPY TOGETHER

LATIKMAN


MANO PO

SIGAW

SPIRIT OF THE GLASS

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5 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
6 AISHITE IMASU
7 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
8 AISHITE IMASU
9 LASTIKMAN
10 SIGAW
11 MANO PO
12 PANAGHOY SA SUBA

sm city fairview
1 SIGAW
2 LASTIKMAN
3 MANO PO
4 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
5 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
6 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
7 ENTENG KABISOTE
8 LASTIKMAN
9 AISHITE IMASU
10 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
11 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
12 MANO PO

sm city manila
1 MANO PO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 AISHITE IMASU
4 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
5 SIGAW
6 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
7 ENTENG KABISOTE
8 SIGAW
9 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
10 AISHITE IMASU
11 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
12 LASTIKMAN

sm city sta. mesa
1 ENTENG KABISOTE
2 MANO PO
3 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
4 AISHITE IMASU
5 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
6 AISHITE IMASU
7 LASTIKMAN
8 SIGAW
9 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
10 SIGAW

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1 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
2 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
3 LASTIKMAN
4 ENTENG KABISOTE
5 MANO PO
6 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
7 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
8 AISHITE IMASU
9 SIGAW
10 MANO PO

sm city north edsa
1 MANO PO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
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4 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
5 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
6 LASTIKMAN
7 AISHITE IMASU
8 SIGAW

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1 LASTIKMAN
2 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 MANO PO

sm supercenter sucat
1 MANO PO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE
3 AISHITE IMASU
4 SIGAW

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1 SPIRIT OF THEGLASS
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3 SO HAPPY TOGETHER
4 LASTIKMAN

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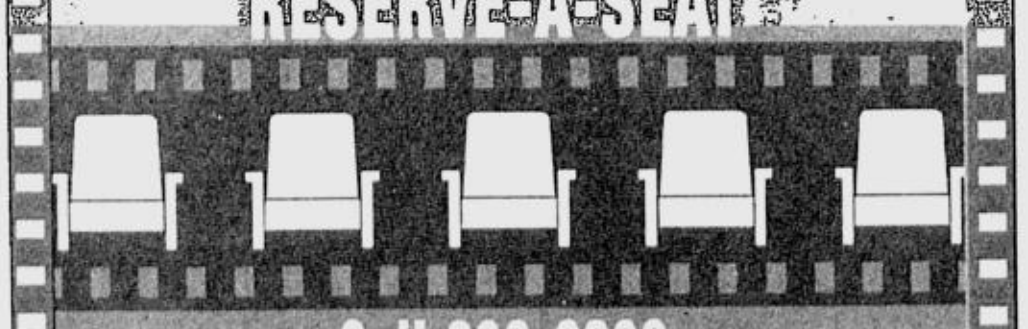

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4 (DOLBY) SPIRIT OF THE GLASS PG13

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2 HAPPY TOGETHER
3 AISHITE IMASU 1941
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2 (SDDS) ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DTS) SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 (SDDS) PANAGHOY SA SUBA
5 (DOLBY) AISHITE IMASU 1941
6 (SDDS) SIGAW
7 (DOLBY) LASTIKMAN
8 (DIGITAL) LASTIKMAN
9 (DIGITAL) HAPPY TOGETHER
10 (DIGITAL) LASTIKMAN

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2 HAPPY TOGETHER
3 LASTIKMAN

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1 ENTENG KABISOTE
2 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
3 LASTIKMAN
4 AISHITE IMASU 1941

st rmall www.clickthecity.com.ph Movies
(Las Pinas) tel (047) 237.7007
1 (DOLBY) SIGAW
2 AISHITE IMASU 1941

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1 (DOLBY) PANAGHOY SA SUBA
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4 HAPPY TOGETHER
5 (DOLBY) LASTIKMAN
6 SIGAW

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'STARTIST' HOST

Gwyneth Albarracin is a new addition to television as host of "Startist," the first reality-based training on TV for future singers. The new show is aired on UNTV from Monday to Friday, 6:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Presented by the Center for Pop Music Philippines, "Startist" can be seen on UHF Channel 37, SkyCable Channel 95 or Home Cable Channel 59. Also a professional model, Gwyneth is a second year college student at the University of Asia and the Pacific.

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MANO PO 3 GP 12:40,3:00,5:20,7:40,10:00	ENTENG KABISOTE GP 12:30,3:00,5:30,8:00,10:30	SPIRIT OF THE GLASS PG13 12:45,2:55,5:05,7:15,9:30
LASTIKMAN R13 12:50,3:10,5:30,7:50,10:10	AISHITE IMASU 1941 PG13 1:20,3:35,5:50,8:05,10:20	SIGAW PG13 12:50,3:10,5:30,7:50,10:10

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GUARANTEED SEATS

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1 PANAGHOY SA SUBA 12:25, 3:10, 5:50 8:30, 11:10 PG 13

2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS 12:25, 2:55, 5:20 7:45, 10:10 PG 13

3 ENTENG KABISOTE 12:30, 3:10, 5:50 8:30, 11:10 GP

4 SIGAW 12:45, 3:15, 5:45 8:15, 10:45 PG 13

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1 MANO PO 3 — FS 12:20PM, 2:45PM, 5:10PM, 7:35PM LMF 10PM (GP)

2 ENTENG KABISOTE (GP)

3 AISHITE IMASU 1941 — FS 12:40PM, 3:00PM, 5:20PM, 7:40PM, LMF 10PM (PG-13)

4 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS — FS 11:40AM, 2PM, 4:20PM, 6:40PM, LMF 9PM

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2	AISHITE IMASU 12:35 2:45 4:55 7:05 9:15
3	PANAGHOY SA SUBA 11:35 2:00 4:25 6:50 9:15
4	LASTIKMAN 10:50 1:10 3:30 5:50 8:10
5	SO HAPPY TOGETHER 12:35 2:45 4:55 7:05 9:15
6	SPIRIT OF THE GLASS 12:35 2:45 4:55 7:05 9:15
7	MANO PO 3 12:30 2:45 5:00 7:15 9:30
8	ENTENG KABISOTE 11:35 2:00 4:25 6:50 9:15
9	LASTIKMAN 11:55 2:15 4:35 6:55 9:15
10	Opens Soon!

ALI MALL CINEMAS

3	SIGAW 11:30 1:40 3:50 6:00 8:10
4	PANAGHOY SA SUBA 10:20 12:45 3:10 5:35 8:00
5	SPIRIT OF THE GLASS 11:30 1:40 3:50 6:00 8:10
6	ENTENG KABISOTE 10:20 12:45 3:10 5:35 8:00
7	MANO PO 3 11:05 1:20 3:35 5:50 8:05

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ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY, LEGEND OF CROCODILE

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	SALAT SA LIGAYA
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	AISHITE MASU (1941)
B	CLOSED
C	

MANDALUYONG CITY

SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA 1,2,3,4	NATIONAL TREASURE / BRIDGET JONES / SPIDERMAN 2 / SHREK 2
PREMIERE THEATRE	THE INCREDIBLES

CAINTA RIZAL

STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	KALABIT
CINEMA-2	SALAT
CINEMA-3	ONE MISSED CALL
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	POLAR EXPRESS
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-6	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-7	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-8	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
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CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	BAD SANTA
CINEMA-12	NATIONAL TREASURE
CINEMA-14	HONEY
CINEMA-15	B CUZ OF U

LORES

CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN

(LAS PIÑAS)	NATIONAL TREASURE
CINEMA-1	PASIYAM
CINEMA-2	BRIDGET JONES
CINEMA-4	POLAR EXPRESS

UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL

(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

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GALLERIA — 632-9115/16

1 ENTENG KABISOTE • THX 11:50 2:25 4:55 7:25 9:50	6 PANAGHOY SA SUBA 11:40 2:15 4:50 7:25 10:00
2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS 10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:50 10:00	7 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
3 LASTIKMAN 11:50 2:25 4:55 7:25 9:50	8 MANO PO 3 10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
4 SIGAW 11:40 2:10 4:40 7:10 9:40	9 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
5 AISHITE IMASU 11:10 1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:00	10 MANO PO 3 12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:30

ERMITA — 536-7809 to 12

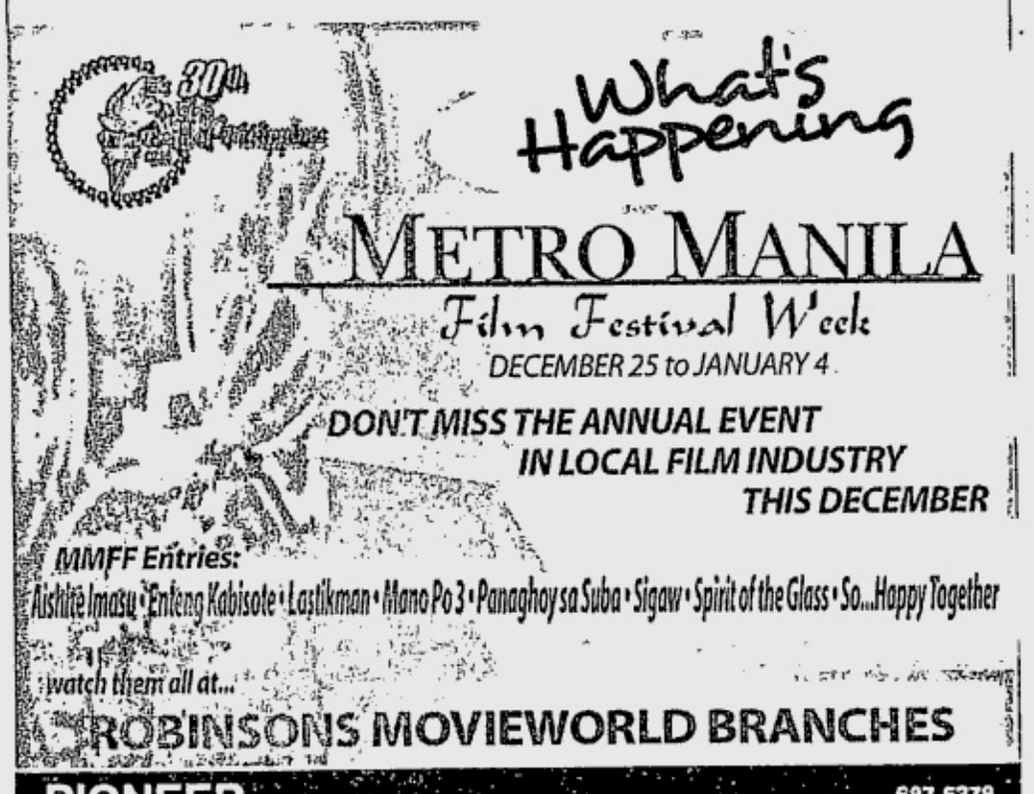
1 ENTENG KABISOTE	
2 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER	5 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
3 AISHITE IMASU	6 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
4 LASTIKMAN	7 MANO PO 3

METRO EAST — 682-8193/99 • 682-8280

1 MANO PO 3	5 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
2 ENTENG KABISOTE	6 LASTIKMAN
3 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS	7 AISHITE IMASU
4 PANAGHOY SA SUBA	8 SIGAW

NOVALICHES — 935-3229/31

1 SIGAW	5 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
2 AISHITE IMASU	6 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS
3 LASTIKMAN	7 ENTENG KABISOTE
4 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER	8 MANO PO 3



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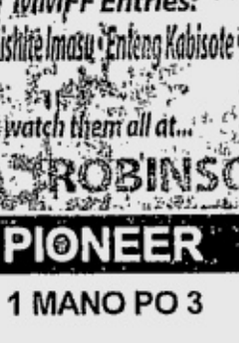
1 MANO PO 3	3 SO...HAPPY TOGETHER
2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS	4 SIGAW

Citisquare MALABON — 288-0985 / 2575

1 ENTENG KABISOTE	3 PANAGHOY SA SUBA
2 SPIRIT OF THE GLASS	4 LASTIKMAN

CAINTA — 240-4661

1 MANO PO 3	3 LASTIKMAN
2 ENTENG KABISOTE	4 SIGAW



UpClose and Personal with the cast of *Enteng Kabisote and Spirit of the Glass*

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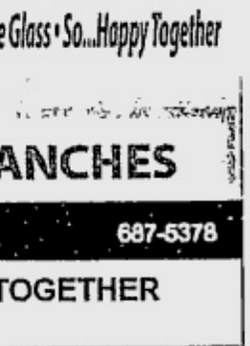

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AIZA SEGUERRA

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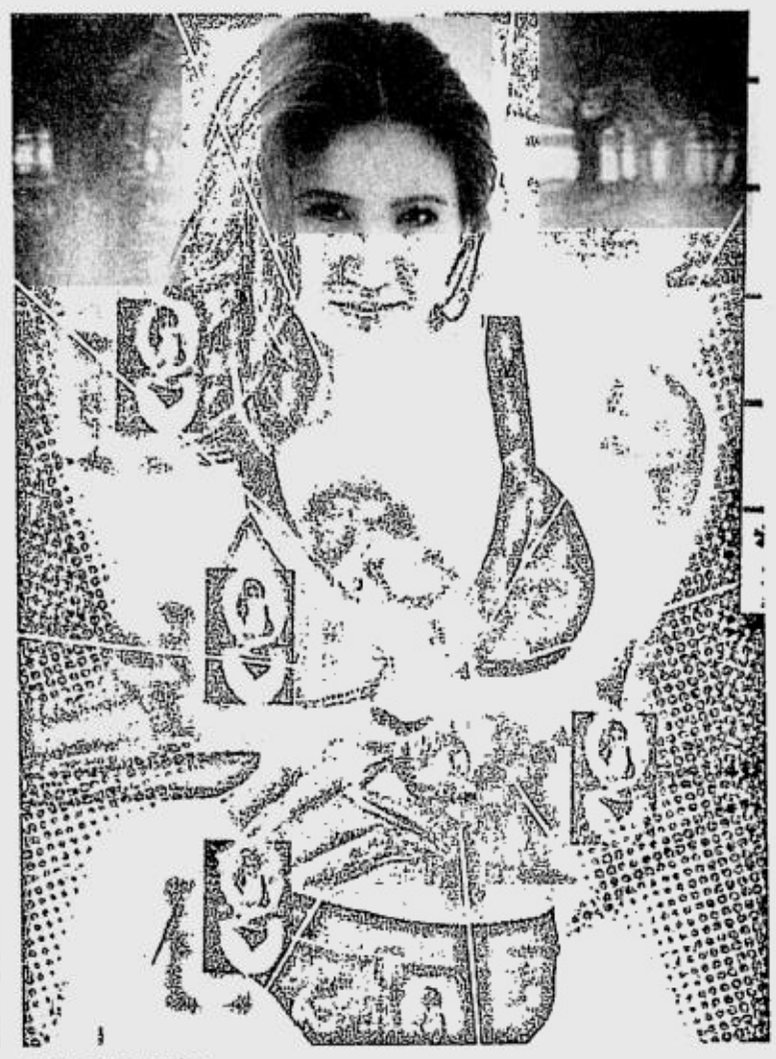

RICA PERALEJO

Celebrity photographer, manipulator

BOY ABUNDA

DOMINIQUE James' "hyperreal" digitally manipulated photographs are his newest interpretations and reconstructions of celebrity portraiture, his specialty.

The famous faces emerge, almost phantasmagorically, through layers or a jumble of odd symbols, visual metaphors and arcane references.

Lorna Tolentino's lovely face peers out through a snarl of taut strings like a violin's. Judy Ann Santos is re-drawn as a comic strip heroine.

Bold new process

"Mastery of digital technology plays a large part in it," says James, one of the country's first professional photographers to exploit the creative and commercial potentials of digital imaging technology when the first generation of professional-grade digital cameras were introduced four years ago.

"But what is perhaps more essential in this bold new process is the power to use an array of exciting imaging tools in bringing to life never-before-seen creative visions," he adds.

At first glance, the "hyperrealistic" celebrity portraits of James appear whimsical, fanciful, and outrageous. The profusion of design styles, graphic elements and color combinations seems unruly.

Upon closer inspection, there emerges a neatly ordered logic and a clarity of meaning.

"It is a process of constructing a rich, eloquent visual material" printed vividly on Epson paper and ink, explains the photographer.

He compares it to understanding poetry wherein the first reading reveals nothing but fleeting and jagged impressions. Upon repeated readings or, in the case of hyperrreal images, more discerning viewing, the images begin to speak in a new visual language that everyone understands.

Child-woman Aiza

Take the portrait of Aiza Seguerra, with her child-like clasped hands and kewpie lips and round unclouded eyes reflected in the bright orbs strung across her front. She recalls the charmingly sassy child performer on a noontime TV show who captured everyone's hearts years ago.

"Some people may find it amusing to see how she has turned out today," says James. "But the Aiza that we know today and have come to accept and love is the Aiza that we actually and surprisingly want. In my hyperreal rendition of her, I wanted to reconcile my idea of who Aiza was as a child and who she is now as a young adult coming to terms with herself."

James sees Judy Ann Santos as a pop goddess, a comic-strip diva. "I used the comic-strip panels and the dreamy swirls of clouds as idiomatic expressions of her life, her achievements, and her stardom."

Effective Gladys

Having photographed Gladys Reyes several times, James admits to being still amazed at how far removed her real-life persona is from the bitchy characters she plays on TV and in the movies.

"This demonstrates how truly effective she is as an actress," he says. "I gave Gladys a vampy look that borders on punk. And then I added a dash of sophistication through graphic elements in black and dark greens with touches of red. It goes well with her skintight leather pants. Gladys is a chameleon when it comes to role portrayals, and a truly good person in real life.

In creating a hyperreal photo image, Dominique James begins with a thought or a concept of how he wants the image to come out.

"Sometimes the intended result is not reached, particularly if a celebrity is not a caricature of her or his own fame, as in the case of Marjorie Barretto. But it often leads to surprising results. I used Marjorie's entrancing smile as a basis for constructing a quasi-religious iconic image."

RUFFA GUTIERREZ

Dark, complex Lorna T

It was as difficult to hyperrealize Lorna Tolentino," one of the actresses I deeply admire," says James. "Even the simplest emotion becomes laden with layers of meaning when she acts it out," he says. "In real life, she's bubbly and amiable, but you can sense the strong currents of emotions behind the warm and open smiles and laughter.

"I've always viewed Lorna as a dark, complex and sophisticated person. When I photographed her, I wasn't disappointed."

To view some of the photo prints, visit Katha, Epson's photo prints gallery, at the Digital Exchange in Glorietta, Ayala Center in Makati City.

For more info on Epson, visit www.epson.com. To retrieve a free PDF portfolio file of the complete set of hyperreal photographs of Dominique James, e-mail your request to studio@dominiquejames.com. For more information on Dominique James, e-mail info@dominiquejames.com or visit www.dominiquejames.com.

2 women and the rest of theM

HERE'S a tale of two women, both Filipinas, living in two cities across the globe.

One is a mathematician and a *dottore* in *filosofia* who lives in Florence, Italy. The other is an eminent jazz singer but with a genre-free versatility that has made her a draw in upscale bars, clubs and hotels in Manila.

Both have traveled many routes and in equivalent directions, before meeting at an intersection last year when they formed a friendship and parlayed shared interests in a CD collaboration.

The CD is "One of These Days," a new seven-song album released by N/A Records. It is a sophisticated collection. To call the music jazz would be accurate but limiting. While there's a "jazz waltz," there are also two ballads. Two cuts in the bebop tradition are balanced by music that's distinctly festive in the Afro-Cuban and Caribbean or bossa nova sense.

And the woman responsible for this versatile, listener-friendly entree is Faye Miravite, who adds art historian, poet, classical guitarist, jazz pianist, classical composer, and business consultant to her intimidating resumé.

Bringing life to Faye's music is Sandra-Lim Viray, singer with the band JFK and Romy Posadas, and an entrepreneur who markets custom furniture designed by her husband Jun Viray, better known as a drummer of equal repute as his wife.

Sandra fronts a crack team of musicians assembled specially for the recording, which includes legendary jazz pianist Romy Posadas, Roger Herrera on bass, arranger Egay Avenir on guitar, Jun Viray on drums, with guest artists Mike Guevarra on soprano and tenor sax, Brandy Aranilla on trumpet and Italian percussionist Paolo Chiurlotto.

None of this would have happened if Faye hadn't come home to Manila on business in early 2003 and discovered the old Monks' Dream at Rockwell where Sandra, Jun and Egay regularly performed as JFK.

Sandra herself named both the band and the recording group theM, with a capital M, which could also be read as theM or Miravite Project, Faye's surname. The name worked on many levels, just as the CD does.

"One of These Days," the title track, sets the spirited mood of the CD and sustains the foot-tapping tempo with "It's You." "If I Ever Write a Song," is an old school ballad, which was the first song Faye ever wrote in jazz style, influenced by her passion for Carmen McRae.

Sandra channels Billie Holiday in "Under Your Spell," except that Sandra makes Billie her own—clear, distinctive, with a small aching rasp in her voice. The CD ends like a perfect day, with the pleasurable, waltz-like "Blue."

The music of the album, which was recorded in three days, embraces an eclecticism that gels in all the right places, music that's feel-good, genial, celebratory, affecting.

TheM Project's "One of These Days" is an assured piece of work. Faye and Sandra and the rest of theM should be credited for a CD that also stands as a shining example of music that bridges genres and crosses generational, gender, and yes, geographic divides.

Copies of the CD now available at all Tower Records and Music One outlets.

"ONE OF THESE Days." To call it jazz would be accurate but limiting.

INQUIRER

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
published every Sunday and distributed in key cities

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P230 per column centimeter every Sunday

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for reservations / cancellations / corrections
Thursday 12:00 noon

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING DIVISION
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☎ 9129008-11 Fax 9129011
SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City
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G/F Trinity Bldg., 636 T.M. Kalaw St., Manila
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1

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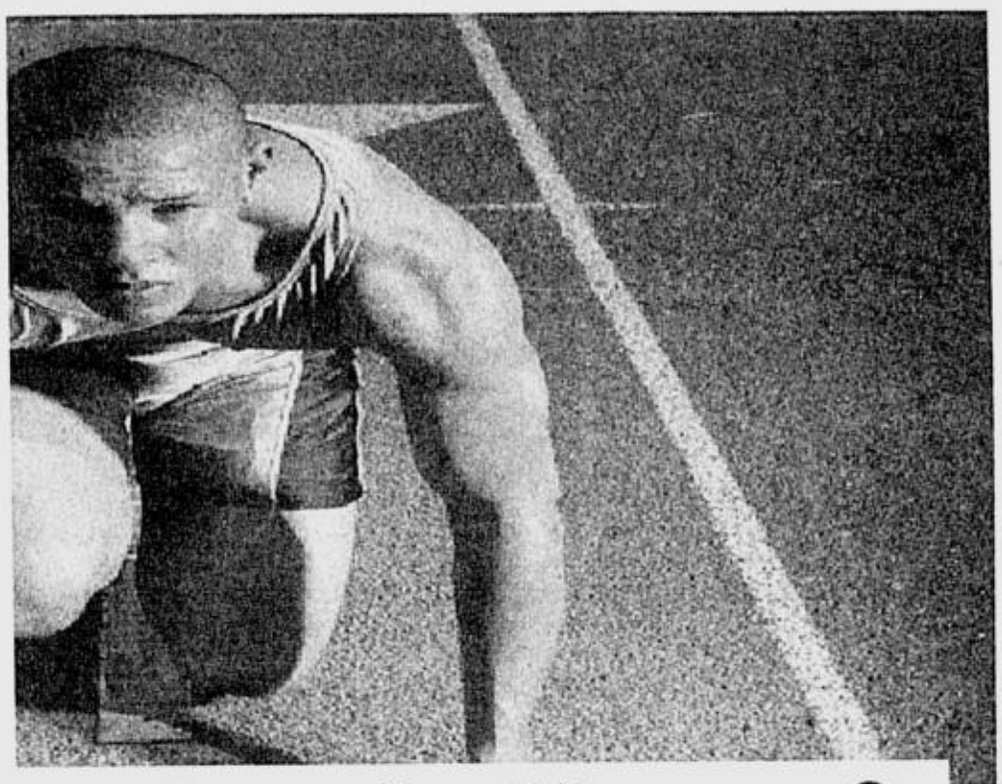

Ready to take the challenge?

Your future begins with the WORLD'S MOST AWARDED and LARGEST ASIA-BASED call center

eTelecare needs highly skilled individuals who will provide financial advice on **Mutual Fund** and **Brokerage Accounts** for our Fortune 100 US client. These **Inbound Customer Service Associates** will deal with inquiries, transactions and financial issues related to clients' accounts.

eTelecare can provide you with the **Best-in- Class training** necessary for you to become a Certified Financial Analyst.

QUALIFICATIONS:
- Graduate of any 4-year course
- Excellent problem-solving and communication skills

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For an immediate phone interview, call **(02)580-6530.**
Visit our office at **20/F CYBERONE BUILDING, EASTWOOD CITY CYBER PARK, BAGUMBAYAN, QUEZON CITY.**
Email your resume to **recruiting@etelecare.com**

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ARE YOU COMPETENT ENOUGH to fill in any of the following positions?

Direct Sales & Telemarketing Agency:
- Ready to use database of prospective clients with experienced number of sales people
- Experienced in "Outbound Calls"
- With working offices and phone lines located in Metro Manila/Davao/Cebu/Iloilo & Cagayan de Oro (provincial applicants for Direct Sales only)

Direct Sales Agent/Telemarketer:
- College Graduate or College Level/Male or Female/21-35 years old
- Pleasing Personality
- Self-Driven
- Selling Experience

For Qualified Metro Manila Applicants:
Submit the required documents at the 30th Floor Robinsons Equitable Tower, Ortigas Avenue, Pasig City

For qualified provincial applicants:
Submit the required documents c/o Jmalaluan@Bankard.com or Mlugay@Bankard.com.

Required Documents:
Direct Sales/Telemarketing Agencies:
- Business Registration
- Audited Financial Statement
- Articles of Incorporation
- Company Profile

Direct Sales Agents/Telemarketers:
- Comprehensive Resumé with 2x2 picture
- Latest NBI Clearance

Ensure HUGE profits for your company in Partnership with one of the country's pioneeer in the credit card business!

BANKARD, a member of the largest business conglomerates in the Philippines, is looking for a reputable and dependable Direct SAles/Telemarketing Company and Self-driven AGENTS to join their dynamic sales force.

BANKARD' Philippine RI AWARDS
There's nothing like it!

GHS

GLOBAL HEALTHCARE STAFFING

NURSES

GHS recruits and offers placement of nurses seeking residence and employment in the United States

We provide a comprehensive transition program and a complete benefits package!

REQUIREMENTS
- Recent relevant acute care experience minimum of one year in a specialty
- English language fluency – TOEFL/TSE or IELTS certification or are planning to take the exams
- CGFNS evaluation or equivalent
- Professional references
- NCLEX status

GHS OFFERS
- Green card sponsorship
- Competitive salaries
- Medical and Dental benefits
- Paid vacation and sick time
- Exam reimbursements (CGFNS, TOEFL, TSE, IELTS, NCLEX)
- Housing and airfare packages
- Much more

For more information about these exciting International programs, please contact:
Tel. No. 001-877-GHS-8200 / Fax No. 001-212-679-7868
philippines@globalstaffing.net

BUILD A CAREER WITH US!

Do you have what it takes to be in a highly competitive, sales-oriented environment? We are looking for ACHIEVERS to join our team as:

BRANCH HEADS
(Metro Manila, Bacolod, Batangas City, Cagayan De Oro, Davao, Lipa, Sta. Rosa, Tarlac)

Minimum of 5 years sales experience in a managerial capacity; Consistent in reaching sales targets
Branch banking experience preferred but not required; Client centered and values customer service
Self-driven and results oriented; Proven leadership capabilities

MARKETING OFFICER (Binondo)

Minimum of 2 years proven track record in sales (in a supervisory capacity)
With significant and extensive experience in developing marketing plans
Must be Chinese-speaking; Client centered and values customer service
Highly assertive and can work with minimal supervision; Highly proficient in MS Office

PRODUCT MANAGER

Degree in Business Administration, Marketing or Mass Communication
With at least 2 years experience in Product Marketing or Sales as a junior officer
Can conceptualize and implement marketing programs; Preferably with experience in handling the OFW market
Highly creative and proficient in MS Office; Excellent presentation skills
Excellent team player and can work with minimal supervision

COLLECTIONS OFFICERS

Between 26-35 years old; At least 3 years experience in Collections gained from a credit card company (the last 2 years of which in a supervisory level)
Good leadership skills; analytical and is able to recognize or anticipate problems and recommend timely, cost-efficient solutions; Client-centered and values customer service
Equipped with excellent, persuasive negotiation skills
Performs well under pressure and is prepared to extend working hours when necessary

ACCOUNT OFFICER (Mortgage Banking)

Between 25-29 years old; With at least one (1) year experience as account officer for housing loans
Previous experience in handling end-buyer financing for developers (an advantage)
Assertive and results-oriented; With excellent interpersonal, communication and presentation skills
Proficient in MS Office

COLLECTIONS ASSISTANTS

Between 22-27 years old; Graduate of any business course
Preferably with at least 6 months collections experience gained from a credit card company
Can work with minimum supervision and prepared to extend working hours when necessary
Resourceful and is able to prioritize tasks; Excellent communication and negotiation skills
Proficient in MS Office

INTERESTED APPLICANTS MAY SEND THEIR RESUME WITH 2" X 2" COLORED ID PICTURE TO:

THE HUMAN RESOURCES GROUP
Recruitment Department
PSBank Center, 777 Paseo de Roxas corner Sedeño St., Makati City
Email: recruitment@psbank.com.ph
(use APPLICATION <position desired> as subject line)
Deadline for submission is Friday, 31 December 2004

Previous applicants need not apply.

PSBank
PHILIPPINE SAVINGS BANK
A METROBANK SUBSIDIARY

URGENTLY NEEDED

A financial institution is in need of highly dynamic individuals to fill-up the following positions for its 1st Quarter Expansion program for 2005

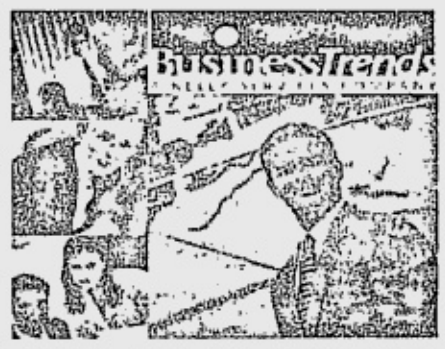
AUDITORS/ACCOUNTING CLERK ACCOUNT SERVICE PERSONNEL
- Male/Female; 21-25 years old
- Accounting Graduate
- Can work under pressure with minimum supervision
- Willing to be assigned in the following areas: Luzon-Metro Manila / Antipolo/Malolos / San Fernando, La Union / Sta. Cruz Laguna / Legaspi City / Masbate, Visayas-Raxas City / Iloilo City / Borongan / Catbalogan / Carcar.

PROGRAMMER
- Male not more than 30 years old
- BS Computer Science Graduate
- At least two (2) years work experience as Programmer
- Knowledgeable in development of program Application using Windows & DOS based system
- Exposure in LAN set up programs & NT Server
- Willing to travel in different provinces

GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS:
- Honest/Hardworking/People Oriented
- Excellent in oral and written Communication

Applicants may send their resumé with 2x2 picture and transcript of records to (please indicate the position applied for & the area of preference).

Box No. KA-010-04 MT
c/o Philippine Daily Inquirer
G/F Trinity Bldg.
#636 T.M. Kalaw St.
Ermita, Manila



OPEN HOUSE

Recruitment

December 13 - 29, 2004 * 9am – 3pm
HAND IN YOUR RESUME PERSONALLY AND BE INTERVIEWED RIGHT AWAY!

URGENT REQUIREMENTS

Customer Service Representatives
INBOUND and OUTBOUND

Must be willing to work in a CALL CENTER environment * Excellent ENGLISH communication skills * Willing to work on shifting schedules * Minimum educational attainment: 2nd Year College * 300 Full-Time positions available

IT SALES REP.

College Graduate * Preferably 1-4 yrs experienced employees specializing in Sales-Engineering/Technical/ IT or equivalent * 25 Full-Time positions available

MANAGERIAL POSITIONS
CALL CENTER MANAGER
WORKFORCE ANALYST
MARKETING MANAGER

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS
C / C++ COBOL JAVA
ORACLE ASP.Net VB.Net
C# VISUAL FOXPRO PHP

GENERAL POSITIONS
Executive/Admin Assistant
Receptionist
General Clerk
Encoder

ACCOUNTING
Accounting Assistant
Accounts Analyst
Finance Staff

1603 JOLLIBEE PLAZA, EMERALD AVE., ORTIGAS CENTER, PASIG CITY
TEL: (632) 631-3109/47
E-MAIL: bipiis2004@pbonanza.com.ph

RESPECT

At Pru Life Insurance Corporation of U.K. RESPECT is more than a value – it is the culture.

We invite men and women to consider our current requirements and discover the culture of RESPECT amidst the highly exciting and competitive field of life insurance.

AGENCY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER
(North Mindanao, West Visayas, Bicol)
Must be 30-45 years old, a graduate of Management or Marketing and with a minimum of 5 years sales management and training experience with a reputable insurance or pre-need company. Has established residence in the area being considered. With a strong network and business contacts in the specific area of assignment.

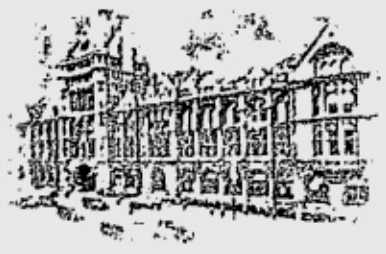
REGIONAL SALES MANAGER
(Visayas & Mindanao)
Must be at least 35 to 45 years old, a graduate of Management or Marketing, with at least 5 years of successful track record in insurance sales management, preferably in Visayas and Mindanao. Applicant should have excellent communication and interpersonal sills, and a strong drive to achieve challenging targets. We are looking for a highly energetic individual who will push for business goals relentlessly, while speaking and acting with integrity at all times.

If you think you can take up the challenges for these positions, send us your resume before Dec. 28, 2004

You may submit your resumé, copy of transcript of records and ID picture to:

Human Resources Department
Pru Life Insurance Corporation of U.K.

25/F Tower 1, The Enterprise Center
6766 Ayala Avenue corner Paseo de Roxas and Dela Rosa Sts.,
Legaspi Village, Makati City
E-mail address: HR@prulifeuk.com.ph
Website: www.prulife.com.ph



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www.go2canada.com

FREE ASSESSMENT

WANTED IMMEDIATELY

MARKETING
- Male or Female • Single • Graduate of a 4 yrs. course
- With experience on Marketing

ADMIN. or OFFICE SECRETARY
- Female • Single • Graduate of a 2 yrs course • With experience

EDITOR
- Final cut PRO

Email resumé with picture @ clancher@earthlink.net

URGENTLY NEEDED
for Greenhills Coffee Shop

SHIFT MANAGER
- HRM Graduate (Preferred)

BARISTA/CREW/STAFF
- With or without experience

Call Anthony 277-9572 or 0926-6557755
Or Apply personally with resumé, ID photo at Unit 508 Davna Corp Center, 321 Dasmariñas St., Binondo, Manila
Dec. 28 & 29 to Jan 3 & 4, 2005, 10AM - 12PM
E-mail: anthony@compass.com.ph

A company engages in *Italian Sanitation* products and cleaning equipments is looking for dynamic, highly competent, self-driven Male/Female individual to fill up the following positions:

Sales Executive
- Graduate of Marketing or Business Management
- With at least 3 years sales management experience in cleaning equipments, (ride on machine, auto scrubber, vacuums cleaner, Rotary Machine, Ultra High Speed floor machine and the like)
- Knowledge about cleaning chemicals and disinfectants is an advantage
- Computer Literate
- Must handle in establishing new accounts
- Hardworking, proactive attitude, and love challenges

Custodial Technician/ Supervisor
- At least College Level
- With 5 years work experience as Custodial Supervisor from a prestigious company or hotel
- Has knowledge on how to operate floor machines specifically the Auto Scrubber and Hi Speed Floor Machines

Please send your Curriculum Vitae with photo to:
Human Resources
Dorgali St. Athena Palace Classique
Anabu 2, 4103 Imus Cavite
Or e-mail to Mathia@pldirect.com

An expanding Export Garment company in Quezon City is in need of:

MERCHANDIZERS (3)
- M/F, college graduate of any course, 25-35 years old
- Knows the approval process of product development
- Minimum of 2 years merchandising experience in knits and woven
- Analytical, keen to details, mature and can handle pressure
- Aggressive, meticulous and with good judgement
- Willing to work long hours and can cope up with different types of personality

INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERS (10)
- 22-26 years old, M/F, with or without experience
- Analytical, keen to details, mature and can handle pressure
- Aggressive, meticulous and with good judgement
- Eager to learn and willing to work long hours
- Team player and can cope up with different types of personality

Apply at:
#15 Victoria Hills St., SFDM, Q.C
Tel. No. 411-1504 to 05, Fax No. 411-1506
Email Add: jovelynr@pacific.net.ph

SC Johnson
A FAMILY COMPANY

S.C. JOHNSON is an American multinational company recognized as one of the world's leading manufacturers of household care products with brands like ***Baygon, Raid, Glade, BayFresh, OFF!, Toilet Duck, Pledge***, and ***Johnson Wax***.

We are currently in need of experienced, dynamic and highly skilled personnel to fill the following positions:

STRATEGIC PURCHASING MANAGER

This position is responsible for the Strategic Purchasing function of the company. Typical duties include price and contract negotiation, building supplier partnerships, sourcing of materials for existing and new products, supply logistics and other sourcing and purchasing projects.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- At least 2 years managerial experience in Purchasing, preferably with regional sourcing background in a multinational consumer or pharmaceutical company
- Excellent communication skills
- Highly computer literate in MS Office applications

SALES INFO & ADMIN OFFICER

This position is responsible for providing effective support to the Sales team. Support will be in: a) providing accurate and timely statistics and factual data analysis/interpretation, b) ensuring that the administrative norms, policies and procedures of the Company are followed, c) development and maintenance of a customer sales information system, and d) rendering good customer service and proper coordination with other departments.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- At least 1 year experience in Sales information and administration work, preferably in a multinational consumer or pharmaceutical company
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- Highly computer literate in MS Office applications and database management systems

Send your application letter, comprehensive resume with picture not later than December 31, 2004 to:

The Human Resources Department
S.C. JOHNSON AND SON, INC.
6371 Estrella Street, Guadalupe Viejo, Makati City
or send through e-mail at: *cslee@scj.com*

CWS
"Great People
Great Company"

Dynamic Sales Manager

CWS Philippines aims to rapidly consolidate our position as the number one commercial hygiene service provider in the industry. Our industry is competitive and aggressive. Success comes to those who can lead from the front and develop a highly productive team that is focused on delivering a market leading service to their customers. This job is not for the inexperienced. You need to be a leader in customer service, sales and people management.

Role Purpose
To develop a team of Sales & Key Account Managers to both maintain and grow our extensive customer portfolio as well as new business opportunities. We recognize the importance of delivering market-leading service through both our service specialist and our sales team. You will ensure that your team delivers the highest level of customer service at all times. Your Sales team will be highly motivated and productive and you will need to know how to manage Sales people. This will only be achieved through team development and by leading from the front through the use of our structured prospecting plan and CWS cold calling techniques.

Quantitative Key Measurement
- Delivers sales targets at all levels
- Ensure team responds to internal & external customer requests within 24 hours.
- Budget achievement - monthly
- Ensure planning tools are in place and utilized for effective sales & prospecting production rates
- Ensure all activities are aligned to all CWS sales & service manuals

Qualitative Key Measurement
- Sales activities are aligned to the country's plan
- Ensures that team meets agreed customer call rates
- Weekly one on one meeting with full team
- Sells to the price list. Discounts require approval
- Ensure all CWS corporate identity requirements are met

Core competencies
- Demonstrated high level of Sales Management in a service industry
- Ability to develop a team through "one on one" coaching & motivation
- Understands the sales "number games"
- History of solution selling
- High level of negotiation skills
- Strong customer service skills
- Leads from the front & "hands on"
- Genuine portfolio developer.
- Strong communication skills both verbal & written

Personal Qualities
- Builds respect, trust and pride within Sales team.
- Sense of humor.
- Open, honest & empathetic
- Detailed approach
- Outgoing personality, friendly approach and optimistic

Our organisation provides an environment that rewards achievement, innovation and team spirit. Interested individuals are invited to send their resume complete with relevant particulars, current and expected salary, together with a recent passport-sized photograph (n.r.) via mail or email to:

MS. SUE STA. MARIA
PRIMEPOINT Management Services, Inc.
Unit 503 Regina Bldg . 100 Aguirre St
Legaspi Village, Makati City
Email -- whatcanwedoforyou@primepoint.com.ph
Tel. No 830-0679; 830-0646 *Fax No. 830-0785
Closing Date: January 5, 2005

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FREE ASSESSMENT

visit us at
www.jobmarketonline.com

European based company
SAGE PLUS
is in need of:
MULTIMEDIA DEVELOPER
- with basic Programming
- DataBase Security Management, and
- Flash Action Scripts expertise
- Graphic Design skills a plus

Fax resume to: T426-5125
or email to:
trvlg2@yahoo.com
cc:rogr2000@yahoo.com

AIG Business Processing Services, Inc.

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL GROUP, INC. (AIG) is a Fortune 500 company and the world's leading international insurance and financial services organization, with operations in approximately 130 countries.

AIG member companies serve commercial, institutional and individual customers through the most extensive worldwide property-casualty and life insurance networks of any insurer. AIG's global businesses also include financial services, retirement savings and asset management. The common stock is listed on the New York Stock Exchange, as well as the stock exchanges in London, Paris, Switzerland and Tokyo.

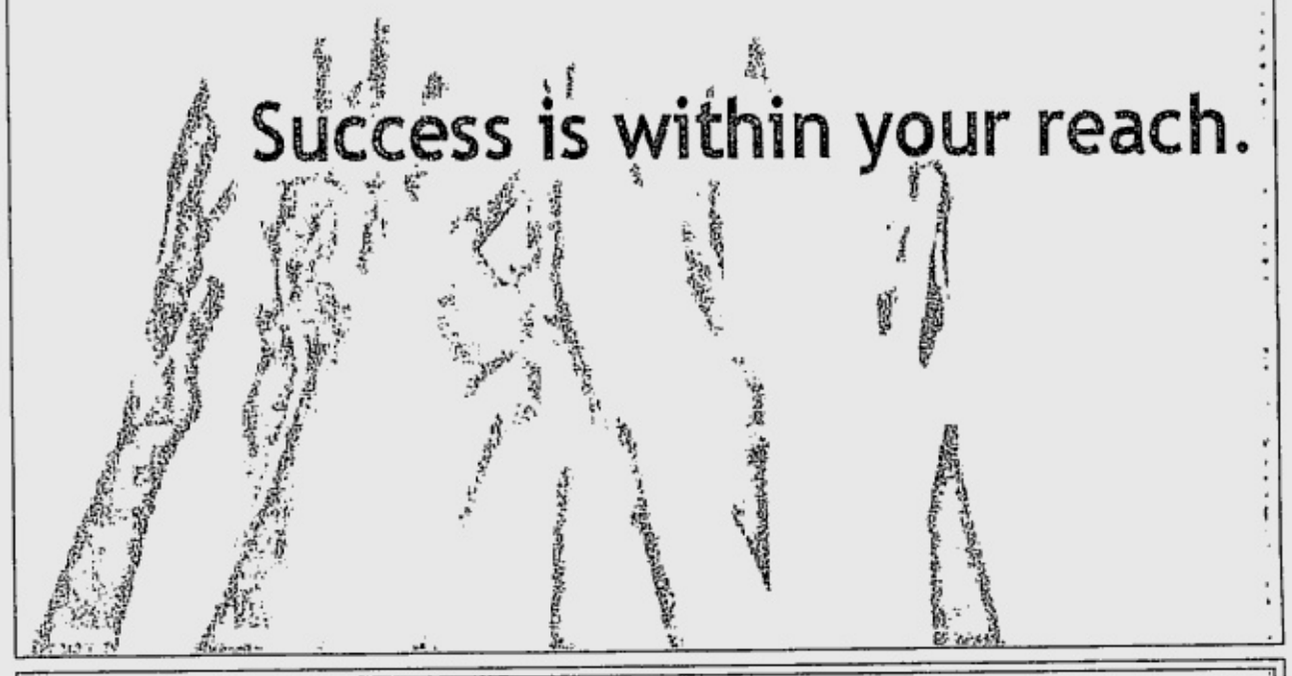
AIG Business Processing Services, Inc. (AIG-BPSI) is a business process outsourcing (BPO) company serving the needs of AIG American General Life Insurance Companies. AIG-BPSI invites you to be part of its pioneering and fast-growing operations. Successful candidates will undergo intensive training and can look forward to a financially rewarding and enriching career.

We're looking for Call Center Representatives

You will be reporting to the Call Center Team Leader and will be responsible for handling customer inquiries, providing general information on the company's products and services and processing requests of customers to update policy information.

Job Requirements
- Graduate of any four-year course
- Willing to work in the night shift
- Excellent verbal and written English communication skills
- Strong interpersonal and customer service skills
- Good listening skills
- Computer literate

Please submit your resume with 2x2 picture and TOR at the 8th Floor Philamlife Building, 1207 Acacia Avenue, Madrigal Business Park, Alabang, Muntinlupa City or email us your resume at BPSI-APPLICANTS@AIG.COM.



Save the Children.

Save the Children Federation, Inc. is a US-based non-profit organization working in over forty countries, including the United States, and serving more than 15 million children and their families, implementing community development projects that create lasting, positive change in the lives of disadvantaged children and adolescents. Save the Children is currently searching for qualified candidates for the following vacancies:

NATIONAL PROGRAM COORDINATOR FOR ADOLESCENT REPRODUCTIVE & SEXUAL HEALTH - Manila (Code: NC-ARSH)

Duties & responsibilities:
- Develop project proposals, program activities & materials Provide technical support and assistance to program areas (West Visayas & Metro Manila); review all plans and activities relative to consistency with the program's framework
- Monitor and assess the conduct of program activities and prepare narrative status report ; ensure that all activities and outputs are accomplished on time and according to desired quality
- Prepare all communications to partner agencies (USAID, DOH, etc.); serve as liaison and coordinate meetings with partner agencies at the national and local levels
- Co-facilitate in workshops and trainings

Minimum requirements:
- at least 5 years experience in developing and managing ARSH programs
- master's degree in Social Sciences, Behavioral Sciences, Social Work or Guidance and Counseling or equivalent experience
- willing to travel to program sites in Visayas and Mindanao
- excellent oral and written communication skills, particularly proposal writing
- proficient in MS Office applications

PROGRAM TECHNICAL COORDINATOR FOR ADOLESCENT REPRODUCTIVE AND SEXUAL HEALTH – Manila (Code: PTC-ARSH)

Duties & responsibilities:
- Conceptualize and implement projects that support the accomplishment of ARSH goals and objectives of the Metro Manila Program
- Provide technical inputs for all on-going activities/projects
- Lead in monitoring, evaluating and documenting outcomes of program interventions
- Ensure strong community participation and mobilization
- Develop linkages with different organizations (government, non-government, private sector) towards building support network
- Organize and sustain pool of community volunteers
- Formulate a comprehensive capacity building plan for volunteers

Minimum requirements:
- at least 5 years experience in community work, particularly with adolescents and with emphasis on reproductive health
- bachelor's degree in social work, community development, social/behavioral sciences, guidance & counseling ; graduate studies a plus
- excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- computer literate

PROGRAM TECHNICAL COORDINATOR FOR MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH – Sulu (Code: PTC-MCH)

Duties & responsibilities:
- Develop and facilitate project interventions and ensure implementation at the community level
- Oversee the evaluation and documentation of effects of project interventions
- Organize inter-municipal trainings for partners
- Attend planning meetings at the Integrated Provincial Health Office and at the regional level to strengthen and improve partnership coordination
- Prepare proposals on Family Planning component to enhance project's quality and outreach
- Assist in linking Municipal Health Committee and Barangay Health Committee as well as the Barangay Development Council with resource agencies
- Assist in the conduct of special studies and researches

Minimum requirements:
- at least 5 years experience in community health development projects with significant exposure in management of Maternal & Child Health programs
- educational background in medicine, nursing, public health or any health-related field; possession of a post graduate degree is highly desirable
- computer literacy is a must
- excellent communication and interpersonal skills, culture-sensitive

CURRICULUM SPECIALIST – Cotabato City (Code: CurSpec)

Duties & responsibilities:
- Review and identify strengths and weaknesses of existing curricula and instructional materials for math, science and English
- Develop new curriculum units and lesson plans that address documented weaknesses in content and student performance
- Assess training needs of teachers & conduct initial train-the-trainer workshops for education faculty, Dep Ed supervisors and school-based master teachers
- Create mentor teams to provide ongoing technical assistance to teachers
- Establish systems for monitoring application of the curricula and instructional materials
- Establish student baseline achievement data to evaluate student progress

Minimum requirements:
- at least 6 years experience in curriculum and instructional materials development and teacher training and education, with focus on English, science or mathematics
- willing to travel frequently to project sites in Datu Piang, Maguindanao, Midsayap, North Cotabato; Talipao, Sulu; and Dinas, Zamboanga del Sur
- experience in Mindanao education, particularly in the public education sector
- familiarity with madrasah education issues
- master's degree in education or equivalent experience
- computer literate, particularly MS Office applications

Attractive and highly competitive compensation and benefits package awaits the successful applicants Interested parties may submit their resumes on or before January 7, 2005 to: *Thru mail* - Save the Children Federation, Inc., No 1 Encarnacion Street corner Lapu-Lapu Avenue, Magallanes Village, Makati City, Metro Manila. *Thru fax*: (632) 853-02-15. *Thru e-mail*: allanoza@savechildren.org Please indicate code in subject line.

Save the Children is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Creating lasting, positive change

THE WORLD BANK
Requires A
Social Development and Operations Officer

The World Bank Office Manila (WBOM) seeks a candidate with strong operational experience in social development, community-driven development (CDD), post-conflict work, and capacity building. The position will be an **Extended Term Consultant (ETC) appointment** for one year renewable for a second year based on satisfactory performance and on the mutual agreement of the Bank and the Consultant. It will be subject to local recruitment and offers an opportunity to work on development challenges facing the Philippines in a global development organization. Based in Manila, the selected candidate is expected to travel frequently within the country.

The successful candidate will work in the World Bank Office Manila (WBOM) under the technical guidance of the Social Development and Mindanao Teams and will report directly to the Social Sector Coordinator, Environment and Social Development Unit, WBOM.

Scope of Work

He/She will have the following major duties and responsibilities:

1. **Project Development and Implementation.** Participate in cross-sectoral task teams to design, document, supervise and evaluate projects with social dimensions of development and community-driven development, especially in Mindanao; assist task teams in identifying and working with appropriate government and civil society partners for project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Participate in supervision missions, mid-term reviews, and project completion missions.
2. **Post Conflict.** Work with the Social Development and Mindanao Teams to guide and advise the project and other stakeholders at the various levels to clarify sound institutional arrangements for peace and development work in Mindanao, and help design, mobilize and facilitate capacity building programs, including conflict management and conflict-resolution, for Mindanao-based and focused institutions.
3. **Local Government Support and Capacity Building.** Help to operationalize the focus on the local platform by looking for opportunities and designing programs/developing ways within existing and future CDD projects to increase the capacity of LGUs to take the lead in planning and implementing local projects using CDD approaches of participation, empowerment and good governance.
4. **Support Analytical and Policy Work.** Provide analytical support to teams working on harmonization of country systems, simplification of procedures on social safeguard policies; harmonization of CDD approaches across Bank-funded projects; and other analytical work undertaken by the Social Development Team.
5. **Other Tasks.** Assist in other tasks as assigned by the Social Sector Coordinator in various thematic areas, such as social safeguards, responsive and accountable public institutions, social protection, etc. Participate in meetings, workshops and other tasks as assigned.

Selection Criteria

- Master's degree or higher in anthropology, sociology, development economics, social welfare or other relevant social sciences.
- Strong operational background with at least 10 years of relevant professional experience in designing and implementing CDD projects.
- Strong work experience in post-conflict and conflict management programs, especially in Mindanao.
- Experience working with LGUs, especially on capacity building programs, is highly desirable.
- Effective oral and written communication skills in English and Tagalog, and proficient computer skills.
- Good interpersonal skills and demonstrated capacity to work effectively in teams
- Willing to travel frequently to and stay for extended periods of time (3 to 4 weeks) in remote rural areas.

The World Bank offers a competitive compensation package based on the local market and attractive medical plan. Please send your application letter, with a comprehensive resume with details of your work experience, academic records, recent photo, references (at least three names with full contact details) not later than **Jan. 2, 2005** to :**KSearch Asia Consulting, Inc.**, c/o Ruby Barcelona at 22/F 139 Corporate Centre, 139 Valero St., Salcedo Village, Makati City or email to rubib@ksearchasia.com or fax to 893-6259

Only applicants who will be short-listed will be called upon for interview.

KSEARCH

THE CHANNEL GROUP

Our company is a well established local leader in providing Information Technology based Business Solutions and True Nationwide Maintenance and Support Services. We are growing steadily to meet the demands of our customers and our target markets. As such we are in need of aggressive individuals who can grow together with us. Currently, we are seeking candidates for the following positions:

Client Executives

- **Responsibilities:**
  - To develop new accounts, retain and service existing accounts
  - Good business acumen & ability to build professional relationship with people at all levels
  - Resourceful in lead generation
  - Able to offer total solution to meet customers' needs
- **Requirements:**
  - Preferably with at least 1 year of direct sales experience in IT.
  - Experience in solution selling is a plus factor
  - Pleasant, motivated, organized self-starter with good written, communication, presentation skills
  - Aggressive, excellent interpersonal skills, target driven and customer oriented

Software Developers (Junior and Senior)

- Male or female with at least 1 to 2 years working experience building programs written in either C/C++ and/or Visual Basic
- Must have good verbal and written skills in English.

Software Development Team Lead

- Male or female with at least 3 to 5 years working experience in a software development group.
- Must have at least 1 to 2 years experience in developing applications written in C/C++ or Visual Basic with database integration (SQLServer, Oracle or PostgreSQL)
- Must have experience in leading a software development team.
- Must have good verbal and written skills in English.

Software Development Project Manager

- Male or female with at least 5 years working experience in a software development group.
- Must have 1 to 2 years Project Management experience in software product development.
- Must be knowledgeable in implementing CMM SEI processes.
- Having PMP certification is an advantage.
- Must have good verbal and written skills in English.

Interested parties should submit their resume together with a recent 2x2 picture to:

Ms. Mylene C. Loreto
Suite 218. The Atrium of Makati
Makati Avenue, Makati City

or via e-mail to mcloreto@channelgroup.net

LAMOIYAN CORPORATION

We are a domestic manufacturer of personal and household care products.
In line with our expansion, we urgently seek for dynamic individuals to fill the following positions :

Brand Assistants

Male/Female; 22-25 years old; graduate of four year Marketing Course; excellent leadership, communication and interpersonal skills; creative, innovative; has skills in business analysis and Project management; good time management.

Account/Distributor Specialist

Male/Female; 23-29 years old; graduate of any four year course; excellent communication skills, good PR, honest, self-motivated, responsible; at least one year experience as Account Specialist/Distributor Specialist/booking salesman preferably for consumer products; willing to travel, physically fit for the position.

Production Pharmacist

Male/Female; 23-29 years old; licensed; has excellent leadership and interpersonal skills; goal and people oriented, responsible, honest, able to work with less supervision; willing to work in shifts.

Interested applicants may send their resume to :
Km. 15 West Service Road, South Superhighway Parañaque City, 1700

A medium-sized commercial bank is in need of a dynamic, self-driven individual for the position of:

UNIT HEAD-Institutional Banking Group

Applicants must be between 30 to 40 years old. The position will have a rank ranging from AVP to VP, depending on the qualifications, and will be responsible for:

- *Supervising a unit of two (2) Account Officers and one (1) Marketing Assistant;*
- *Managing and maximizing returns on existing loan porfolio of PhP1 billion;*
- *Expanding trade-related portfolio of the bank (LC's DA's export financing, etc.)*
- *Soliciting new accounts with acceptable credit rating that the bank can develop into long-term relationships;*

Qualified candidates may send their resumes together with a 2x2 photo to:

Human Resources Management Division
Ortigas Center P.O. Box No. 13914
Ortigas Center, Pasig City 1605

A progressive company is in immediate need of dynamic people to occupy the following positions:

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

- Business course graduate, computer literate
- Single, career oriented, matured, organized, efficient
- With excellent command of oral and written English
- Able to work under pressure with minimum supervision

CIVIL ENGINEER / ARCHITECT

- Male, not more than 30 years old, computer literate
- With at least 3 years experience in hor./vert. devt.

Interested applicants are requested to come personally with their comprehensive resume with 2x2 picture and transcript or records
Monday to Friday, 9:00AM to 5:00PM
Suite 2203B, 22/F, PSE Center-East Tower
Ortigas Center, Pasig City

Philippine TIPS
TUBERCULOSIS INITIATIVES FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Philippine Tuberculosis Initiatives for the Private Sector (Philippine TIPS), a project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under USAID Contract Number 492-C-00-02-00031 and implemented by a consortium led by Chemonics International Inc., is in need of experts to fill in the following positions.

1. NETWORK DIRECTOR AND MANAGER
- At least 5 years' relevant experience in managing health programs
- Experience and/or education in tuberculosis management
- Understanding of and familiarity with the private sector, particularly the single practice physicians
- Experience in implementing health training programs
- MD, PhD in public health, management or marketing, or equivalent training

Duration of assignment : January to June 2005
Minimum level of effort : 6 months
Type of assignment : Full-time consultant

2. OPERATIONS OFFICER
- Training and experience in social science and/or health research
- Preferably with knowledge of TB DOTS
- Bachelor's degree in public health, management or marketing or equivalent

Duration of assignment : January to June 2005
Minimum level of effort : 6 months
Type of assignment : Full-time consultant

3. COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING OFFICER
- Training and experience in communications or marketing
- Preferably with knowledge of TB DOTS
- Bachelor's degree in communications, advertising or marketing, or equivalent

Duration of assignment : January to June 2005
Minimum level of effort : 6 months
Type of assignment : Full-time consultant

4. FIELD MANAGER (For Iligan and Dumaguete)
- At least 5 years' relevant experience in program management, particularly in managing health and/or communications programs
- Experience implementing health training programs
- Understanding and familiarity with the private sector, particularly the single practice physicians
- Bachelor's degree in communication, public health, management or marketing, or the equivalent

Duration of assignment : January to June 2005
Minimum level of effort : 6 months
Type of assignment : Full-time consultant

Qualified applicants are requested to send their expression of interest together with their resume indicating contact numbers to phil_tips@philtips.com on or before January 7, 2005

URGENTLY NEEDED
Experienced KEY ANIMATOR
Japanese / Western Style Welcome
- Inexperienced need not apply
- Applicants shall be entertained by appointment basis only
- Request for interview appointment is up to January 8, 2005
- Bring Resumé and work sample

#2403 A. Aquino cor. F. Torres, Malate, Manila
Tels.: 400-0135, 536-9102 Look for Akira

JOB Market
www.jobmarketonline.com

THE HERITAGE HOTEL
MANILA

THE HERITAGE HOTEL MANILA, is managed by the Singapore-based Millennium & Copthorne International Limited, ranked as Asia's largest hotel group. Its London-based subsidiary Millennium and Copthorne Hotels, plc has under its hotel division, a stable of 91 hotels in 17 countries.

Dynamic and dedicated individuals meeting the qualification below are invited to apply.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Job Description
- Reporting directly to the General Manager (GM) of GRAND PLAZA HOTEL CORPORATION, owning Company of The Heritage Hotel Manila.
- Handles all confidential matters of the GM.
- Handles travel plans and expatriate immigration matters for the Company.

Job Qualification
- Bachelor's degree holders of any 4-year course with excellent interpersonal and communication skills.
- Previous experience in secretary work.
- Must be at least 25 years old with pleasant personality.
- Must display self-motivation, initiative, leadership skill and able to do follow up.
- Excellent planning and organizing skills.

Interested applicants are invited to send their resume complete with relevant particulars, current and expected salary, together with a recent passport-size photograph not later than Dec. 31, 2004 to the following address:

MR YAM KIT SUNG
General Manager
Grand Plaza Hotel Corporation
10th Floor, The Heritage Hotel Manila
Roxas Boulevard cor. EDSA Ext.
Pasay City

PEARL GARDEN HOTEL IN "PERSISTENT PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE AND ACCOMMODATION" NEEDS RESULT ORIENTED PEOPLE TO JOIN OUR "DREAM TEAM".

SALES EXECUTIVE
- Male/Female, 24-28 years old, energetic, pleasing personality, self-motivated, excellent inter-personal relationship, good communication skills, computer literate-Fidelio system is an advantage.
- With existing hotel corporate, travel and trade and government accounts is an advantage.
- Preferably BS Marketing, Business Administration or Mass Communication graduates.
- Good remuneration package with commissions for the qualified prospective applicants

NIGHT/INCOME AUDITOR
- Male, with experience in hotel night income auditing and management reporting and well versed in Fidelio System.
- Will be reporting at night time and will also act as Night Duty Officer.
- Management oriented, trustworthy, honest and dependable.
- BSBA Accounting Major is an advantage or its equivalent in experience.

COST CLERK
- Male, at least 24-30 years old, with experience in food and beverage costing, receiving and storekeeping procedures.
- Graduate of BSBA major in Accounting is an advantage.

Applicants are requested to send their resumé with 2"x2" photo at Pearl Garden Hotel HR/ Personnel Dept., #1700 M. Adriatico St., corner General Malvar St., Malate, Metro Manila.

John Clements Consultants, Inc.

Our client is the world's leading provider of transportation services. To support their Philippine operations, they are looking for a top caliber candidate to occupy this vital role.

INTERNAL LEGAL COUNSEL

Keyword: <ILC>

Responsible for the day-to-day legal operations of the company, the best-fit candidate should be able to present the following credentials:

- Bar Passer, with 2-4 years of experience in Labor and Maritime Legal as well as P & I claims
- Expert in the legal system & substantive procedural law
- With background or knowledge in local and international maritime laws
- Proficient in English, both oral & written;
- Highly analytical and with strong leadership skills

An attractive remuneration package awaits the chosen candidate. Aspirants may forward their resumes indicating the keyword in it and in the e-mail subject line, to the address below or send **SMS** by typing **Profile(space)<keyword> (space) <name, cellphone & landline numbers and send to 700JOBS (700-5627).** FOR SMART USERS ONLY.

Professional Staffers

A Division of John Clements Consultants

Level 12B, LKG Tower, 6801 Ayala Avenue, Makati City
Telephone: (+63 2) 884-1227, 884-1169, 884-1418, 884-1168
Look for: **Noemi Ebarle**
E-mail Address: noemi.ebarle@johnclements.com
visit: www.johnclements.com

Looking for

PROGRAMMERS/SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS

with the following qualifications:

- Must be an experienced Powerbuilder System Developers
- Must have an experience in converting 2-tier applications to 3-tier architecture
- Experience in developing web enabled and mobile applications (pocket builder)
- Innovative and hardworking

Interested applicant should be available to start immediately
Attractive salary offer.
Please reply to pbprogrammers04yahoo.com

CYBERSOFT DATA NETWORKS, INC.

URGENT HIRING!!!

DATA ENCODERS

- ✔ Single; At least College Level
- ✔ Must be computer literate
- ✔ Excellent typing speed (at least **40 wpm** with **99% accuracy**)
- ✔ Related working experiences is an advantage
- ✔ Willing to comply with shifting schedules
- ✔ Must be available to work immediately

Interested Applicants may submit **personally** their comprehensive resume with recent picture to:

PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT
5/F Pacific Corporate Center,
131 West Avenue, Quezon City

NURSES FOR NEW ZEALAND

Reliable Recruitment Corporation (POEA License No. 280LB-052802-R)
In cooperation with Arcee Nursing International Limited Accred. No. 73589.

Urgently needs 100 Registered Nurses to work in NEW ZEALAND. At least 2 years solid working experience in a Hospital.

- 12 months contract (renewable)
- Salary rate at par with current NZ nurses
- Irresistible benefits
- Deployment as soon as possible
- At least 6 months experience in any of the following: ICU, CCU, PICU, SCBU, NICU, OR, ED, MED/SURG, THEATRE.

***HOLDERS OF NEW ZEALAND, UNITED KINGDOM (UKCC), AUSTRALIAN OR IRELAND NURSING REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE EMPLOYED IMMEDIATELY.

PASSERS OF IELTS (ACADEMIC) RESULT, SPEAKING & WRITING, 7.0 AND WITH OVERALL BAND OF 7.0 OR ABOVE IS AN ADVANTAGE***

Passers of CGFNS, TOEFL, TSE and TWE are exempted from IELTS.

For Professional and Personal Advancement, New Zealand is for you!!!

Please submit detailed resumé to:

RELIABLE RECRUITMENT CORPORATION
1166 Grey St., Ermita, Manila
Tel. No. 5222128 / 5261310 / 5251935
Fax No. 5216119
E-mail: relcor@skylnet.net

Interview conducted DAILY

MAG-INGAT SA ILLEGAL RECRUITER

IDS Logistics — A Member of the LI & Fung Group

IDS LOGISTICS (PHILIPPINES), INC.

IDS Logistics (Philippines), Inc. is a member of the LI & Fung Group, the premier Pan-Asian provider of supply chain services specializing in manufacturing, logistics and marketing.

As a leading provider of third-party logistics services across Asia and in the Philippines, IDS Logistics operates an extensive network of Distribution Centers, Customer Service Centers and Depots in major locations across the country.

We pride ourselves in having a diverse team of committed, multi-skilled and experienced staff who share a passion for excellence in providing logistics services to customers. We are continuing to build and grow our partnerships with clients, most of them leading multinational companies in their respective sectors. As such, there is a need to recruit new members to join our team and to grow with us.

At this time, we seek qualified individuals for the following key positions in our organization:

WAREHOUSE OPERATIONS MANAGER

Assumes responsibility for directing the over-all operations of a Distribution Center for fast-moving consumer goods, with high levels of volume for daily inbound and outbound transactions.

- University degree in Engineering, preferably Industrial or Mechanical.
- 3 years managerial experience gained from manufacturing or distribution sector, in the fast-moving consumer goods or automotive industry.
- Excellent track record in logistics and operations management.
- Adept in modern business solutions and systems, particularly in warehouse operations & inventory management.

TRANSPORTATION MANAGER

Will oversee the operations of the Transportation Management Group and will be responsible for the growth of this business unit.

- University degree in Engineering or other related course.
- 3 years managerial experience in a freight management-related role.
- Adept with transportation management systems.

Interested parties who meet the above qualifications are requested to submit their comprehensive resume to:

Human Resource Department
IDS Logistics (Philippines) Inc.
No. 29 Industria Street, Bagumbayan, Quezon City
Email : logistics_recruitment@idsgroup.com Fax Nos : 687-3630

ONLY CANDIDATES WHO MEET THE ABOVE QUALIFICATIONS WILL BE CALLED FOR INTERVIEW.

CLOSING DATE FOR ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS IS ON JANUARY 3, 2005.

Do you want to build a career?

A medium-sized commercial bank is in need of a dynamic, self-driven individual for the position of

CTS OFFICER

Successful applicant will be in charge of the CTS unit responsible primarily for operations. The rank shall range from Senior Manager to Assistant Vice President depending on the candidate's qualifications.

Candidates must have at least 2-3 years experience in CTS operations and preferably with marketing capability to be able to expand the existing portfolio.

Qualified candidates may send their resumés together with a 2x2 photo to:

Human Resources
Management Division
Ortigas Center, P.O. Box No. 13914
Ortigas Center, Pasig City 1605

DAILY E-NEWSPAPER NEEDS

FULL-TIME WRITER / EDITOR

- Must have news writing/editing experience
- Have high analytical, comprehension skills
- Excellent English communication, grammar skills
- Proficient in typing and PC use
- Can work evenings, with daily deadlines
- Residents of Makati City have a definite advantage

SYSTEMS & NETWORK ADMINISTRATOR

- Expert on Linux servers and PC networking
- Knowledgeable in PHP programming
- Willing to work evenings (6 days a week, including weekends)
- Can communicate in English with other IT officers and non-technical people

E-mail resumé, including expected salary range (in .txt format) to newslink@i-manila.com.ph

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WANTED
ENGLISH TEACHERS

Are you experienced in Quality? Are you passionate about passing on your knowledge and experience to others? We are looking for the right people to successfully teach and motivate students to learn English.

The successful applicants will need to be well organised, flexible and have excellent management skills
Please send your resume and transcripts of record.

For more information, please call.

SOLOMON International School
3rd F Strata 2000 Emerald Ave Ortigas center
Tel:638-2060 Fax: 632-0879

SANGRETECH ASIA BIOMEDICAL CORPORATION

A corporation based at the Asian Hospital and Medical Center Muntinlupa City is in need of the following:

PRODUCTION ASSOCIATE I/II

Requirements:

- Bachelor's Degree in Biology/Life Sciences or equivalent with 1 to 3 years of related experience
- Experience with lab equipment, mammalian cell culture, sterile techniques, computers and intermediate mathematical skills.
- Ability to assemble, disassemble, operate and understand complex equipment per standard operating procedures (SOPs).
- Ability to understand, apply, and evaluate basic chemistry, biology and physical principles as appropriate for the position.
- Skill in handling multiple responsibilities, tasks and projects simultaneously including ability to shift priorities.
- Excellent communication skills and a good command of the English language.
- Ability and motivation to learn and perform new techniques in cellular and molecular biology according to SOP
- Experience in flow cytometry is desirable

Job Descriptions:

Under general supervision, employees will perform:

- Manufacturing processes according to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Specific hands on operation responsibilities include:
  - operating new complex critical processing equipment
  - immunology and cell culture procedures
  - preparing manufacturing batch records
  - preparing required materials
  - setting-up, cleaning and sanitizing production area
  - other procedures as assigned
- Quality control (QC) procedures according to SOPs. Specific responsibilities include:
  - performing QC assays which include flow cytometry, microscopy, and other assays as needed
  - producing assay reports
  - monitoring critical processes
  - executing routine validation protocols
  - other procedures as assigned
- General administrative duties as assigned

Qualified applicants may be posted abroad.

Interested applicants are requested to mail their bio-data with latest photo and transcript of records to:

Sangretech Asia Biomedical Corporation
c/o Laurel Law Offices
15th Floor, JMT Corporate Condominium
Ortigas Center, Pasig City
Tel. Nos.: 634-27-11 up to 13
0917-8081880

A PROGRESSIVE AND DYNAMIC COMPANY URGENTLY NEEDS THE FOLLOWING:

CHIEF ACCOUNTANT (CODE: CA)

- Male/Female
- Must be a Certified Public Accountant (CPA)
- Minimum of (3) years experience in all facets of accounting procedures
- Well versed in all aspects of accounting documents, methods, procedures and government reporting requirements
- Efficient with pertinent computer software & applications
- Excellent communication & leadership skills
- With Good Moral Character & can work under pressure

JR. ACCOUNTANTS (CODE: JRA)

- Female – 21 to 27 years of age
- New graduates of Accountancy
- Above-average oral & written communication skills
- Can work with minimum supervision
- Computer Literate
- Detail Oriented

CREDIT AND COLLECTION OFFICER (CODE: CCO)

- Male / Female – 21 to 27 years of age
- College Graduate, preferably with a degree in Accountancy, Finance, Business Administration, Management or Marketing
- Computer Literate
- Previous experience gained from collection agencies or similar industries will be an advantage
- Detail Oriented
- Willing to do field work

HR OFFICER (CODE: HRO)

- A Degree in Behavioral Science, Psychology or Industrial Relations
- Minimum of (3) years experience (gained from the Manpower Service Industry would be an advantage)
- Thorough working knowledge of all aspects of HR functions
- Detail Oriented & Results Oriented
- Computer Literate
- Excellent oral & Written Communication Skills

Please send your comprehensive resume to:
(Please indicate code on the envelope)

P.O. Box 154
C/o Philippine Daily Inquirer
5th Floor Bldg. B SM-Megamall, EDSA
Mandaluyong City

ODA-funded project seeks

Project Director

with strong project development and local governance background

Job Description

The Project Director shall:

- ✔ be responsible for over-all management of a program of skills transfer, training and advice on project development and management for local government units and local institutions.
- ✔ market the project services to qualified LGUs, line agencies, training institutions and other potential partners.
- ✔ manage, coordinate and administer Project funds to achieve Project goals and objectives.
- ✔ report directly to the NEDA Regional Director in Caraga and the Donor's Department Program Manager

Qualifications

- ✔ Minimum of seven years experience in designing and implementing training programs for LGUs particularly in project identification, feasibility study preparation, project financing, project prioritization. Direct involvement in social marketing for public services. Experience with an international organization an advantage. Knowledge of government procurement system and auditing/accounting rules and regulations an asset.
- ✔ Graduate of MBA, MPA, MAEcon or related field
- ✔ Excellent communication skills-both written and oral
- ✔ Demonstrated understanding of, and commitment to gender and development
- ✔ Willing to be assigned in Caraga for the next three years

Send your application letter with resumé and photo on or before Monday, January 10, 2005 to:

The Regional Director
NEDA Caraga Regional Office
Nimfa Tiu Bldg., J. Rosales Avenue
Butuan City
Email neda13@bayandsl.com or
neda13caraga@yahoo.com

SEND YOUR RESUMÉS INSTANTLY

visit us at
www.jobmarketonline.com

JOB Market

The world of work according to Dana

By Dana MVC
Contributor

Chapter 3
Office Bliss

UP, up and away from the branch, at long last, I found myself in a zone of peace and coolness. Welcome to the comfortable and most elegant areas in the building—the main office floors.

At the 10th floor, a cozy cubicle at a corner waited for me. There, stacks of papers, folders, files, pens, rings of keys, two telephones, a computer, printer and filled-up cabinets seemed to say, "Let's get down to work." I wondered what was in store for me.

Mr. A., was the savior, genteel-mannered SVP who pulled me out from the teller's counter and brought me into this quiet, classy part of the workplace. Everybody in the area was just as busy as the staff from the branch, but here the noises were more of hums, buffering you from the pressure. I liked that.

Mr. A. told me how I would fill up three posts— one of which was to replace his secretary, J. Uneasily, I was introduced face to face, to this garrulous, carefree girl. I thought I would be her adversary but instead I became her friend. Although I never did understand the need why I had to replace her, (when she had been with company much longer than I), J. never showed resentment towards me. And that's all that matters. Later in my career, people like her would be rare to know.

The next two persons I was introduced to, were heaven sent. They were Mr. A's administrative and credit officers, but I knew them more as his advisors. He trusted them with his life and I was so touched to be in the company of these two good persons in our division. They protected me from the ruthlessness of some other people who in a few days would show up. Not once did they falter in their ethics and professionalism. I felt blessed to be surrounded by their good spirits.

No wonder I was in "office bliss." I felt I had checked in some luxury hotel where everyone was mostly spruced up, where I could look out the window, stop for a moment and savor viewing the sights of other modern office buildings and coffee shops that straddle the city street, and where I could go up the penthouse floor, play the grand piano and sip on a 300-peso iced tea while I waited for my boss to sign papers in the executive room.

Soon, however, my stay in the executive department became an exhausting experience. Like a super waitress, I was "serving food all day." Midday for me was 5 p.m. By that time, I still had to fill up logbooks more than all my past diaries combined, receive as many phone calls as I can, arrange late afternoon meetings, summarize all sorts of money-related data and performance re-

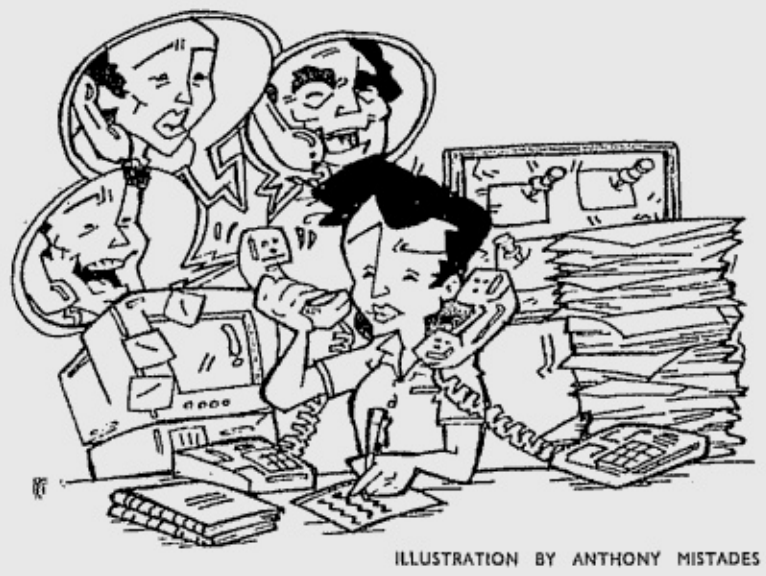

ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY MISTADES

ports coming from 16 branches citywide, and then spend one and a half hours more safekeeping memos, supplies, and ring-bound records. Frequently, I was home by 9 p.m.

One day, I sneaked off to visit the other regal floors for some fresh in-house air. I landed on the 20th floor, the Corporate Communications Department and saw the dummies, layouting desks and Adobe Suite programs in their computers. I had to be transferred here.

At my performance rating interview, I didn't miss to tell Mr. A. how I was actively involved in writing for a publication in school, and that I was the only student in our batch who spent practicum as a trainee reporter at a local broadsheet newspaper. As kind and discerning as he always was, he knew right away what I meant. He promised that on my sixth month, he would recommend my transfer to the corporate communications department. I thought life couldn't possibly be this perfect ... but hey, why not?

The sixth month came and our department had a closed-door meeting. I was touched by Mr. A.'s gesture to congratulate me as a regular employee of the bank. I was totally focused on my transfer, which was promised to me. After the meeting, Mr. A. gave me my regularization paper and confessed that my transfer would be postponed until such time that a vacancy in the corporate communications department would arise. My heart dropped. I believed it would take a long time before such a vacancy would happen. The following day, I gave Mr. A. a letter. It was my resignation.

Chapter 4
New Jobs

Finding a new job wasn't so hard. I was lucky. I was already in a new company in less than two weeks, although deep down I knew that I did not belong to this company involved in gaming and entertainment. Yet, I remained excited about the unexpected. My pay was a little bit higher. In this company, there was a sense of mystery in the air, which was quite intriguing.

I was designated as a group executive assistant, higher level in creative work output than my former post in the bank. Despite having to routinely serve coffee everyday to my boss along with other unavoidable secretarial duties, I appreciated how frequently he would heed my creative voice and expose me to a lot of production-related activities.

Sadly, our division was dissolved and we were moved to a sister company. Though I was excited to be moved to the Marketing Department, my hopes of achieving a sensible career path were dashed when I was given the job of assistant to a notorious Marketing VP. He saw me merely as a filer of papers and coffee-maker. I resigned after two months.

Days after, I got a new job as a writer. Yup ... quite a surprising leap. But, I found out that truly getting what you want could never be easy. I had merely transferred from one disorganized company to the next. There were only eight of us in the company, including the president and VP. Every day, I sat stiffly before a computer typing compositions that wouldn't go anywhere. I think the president was hoping to assign me to write for a sensible project sometime in the future but until such time, I had to look busy scribbling on a weird assignment. It was certainly an aimless project.

My colleagues, however, were wacky, young computer programmers. They were my friends—the only motivation left for me to report to the office each day. Weeks went by and my job function was getting more and more unsatisfying. While waiting for that "sensible future project," I bought oatmeal cookies for my boss and checked the whereabouts of his two children during the day. I also picked up concert tickets for his family one terrible rainy day. Everything was an abominable disaster. Slowly, I was beginning to see myself as a failure ... and the only victory I could have was ... to resign. And so again, I did.

This time, I brought along my friends with me. The boss cried when we all left. Perhaps, because he was compelled to return all our unpaid withholding and social security taxes that he never remitted.

Why work for a call center?

From page P7

commuting and its attendant risks to one's life and property.

Work schedules may not free agents on Saturdays and Sundays to enable them to have interactions with family and friends. It may entail working on holidays such as Christmas, New Year and the Holy Week, which are important events for Filipino Christians.

Some agents claim that the job can become routine and mechanical, and not intellectually stimulating enough. Meeting the sales quota is also frustrating for agents with no business orientation and have low achievement drive.

Career path

If the CSR finds that there is a fit between his or her interests, personality, abilities, skills and potentials, on one hand, and the nature and requirements of the job, on the other, then he or she decides to build a career in customer service and in marketing and sales.

If an agent's performance is admirable, he gets recognition by being promoted a step higher to that of an escalation agent who is tasked with handling difficult customers. This is a stepping stone to being a team leader. The escalation agent handles customers who usually demand to talk to the supervisor or manager. He or she takes the place of the team leader and coaches new agents and those having problems handling difficult customers.

The management path consists of promotion to positions involving more and higher responsibilities and accountabilities with corresponding increase in compensation and benefits. Higher positions include that of being team leader or shift leader, then shift manager and later, operations manager of one account.

(Ms Santamaria is the president of Career Systems, Inc., a leading provider of a wide array of career development training programs and consulting services in the Philippines. Send feedback to carsys@qinet.net.*)*

A Warehouse and Distribution Firm
is in need of the following:

WAREHOUSE SPECIALIST (Supervisor) (Code WS)
and
DISTRIBUTION SPECIALIST (Supervisor) (Code DS)

> College Degree Holder
> Computer Literate
> Detail Oriented and can work with minimum supervision
> With at least 2 years previous work experience gained from the food industry (preferably the top burger chains)
> With expertise in the operation and maintenance of an effective warehouse and or distribution system

Please send your resumé with a 2 x 2 picture to:
(pls. indicate code on the envelope)

BOX NUMBER: 153
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
5th Flr. Bldg-B, SM Megamall, Edsa
Mandaluyong City

e-mail your resume: risaac@inquirer.com.ph

jay c. designs INCORPORATED
is in need of the following:

GRAPHIC ARTIST

Male or female; At least 21 years old; College Graduate and knowledgeable in CorelDraw 11 & Photoshop 7

SALES COORDINATOR

Male or female; At least 21 years old; College Graduate and preferably with work experience; Computer literate; With good oral & written communication skills

Please submit resume with recent picture to:
142 Road 3, Pagasa, Q.C. Tel No. 927-1776
5/F, Bldg. A, SM Megamall Tel No. 635-6298
LGF, SM City North EDSA Tel No. 927-4150

JOB OPENING FOR A SENIOR PROGRAM SPECIALIST

Competencies required:
> research and evaluation skills for satisfactory management of the Foundation's internal and external evaluation
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The applicant must have earned a graduate degree in the social science field or has completed all required units. Most importantly, the candidate must have at least five years of experience in research and evaluation. Actual work experience must include work in a non-profit organization for at least three years with excellent performance evaluation. It is also essential for the applicant to have a working knowledge of various computer applications and report generation. Application letter with resumé (attached to which is a 2x2 picture) should reach the following addressee not later than January 10, 2005.

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> With knowledge in forklift repair and maintenance
> With Professional Driver's License
> Good moral character

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Marketing expert helps establish center for music

By Candy G. Villanueva
Contributor

HR FOCUS

GWEN Albarracin is skilled in stage directing, has over 20 years experience in marketing and has the Pope John XXIII Award for Civic Leadership on her shelf. Arts and management stand out in her impressive and extensive profile but how does human resources fit into the picture? Albarracin is executive vice president of Center for Pop Philippines and handles strategic management of the human resources and administration division.

The Center for Pop Music Philippines, Inc. (CPMP) is the country's first and largest training school that specializes in voice and stage performance development. It boasts of many singing stars as its graduates including Roselle Nava, Dessa, Geneva Cruz, Sarah Geronimo, Nyoy Volante, King, Nina and Jimmy Bondoc. Running this highly respected musical institution is chief executive officer Butch Albarracin, who founded the company. Behind the CEO is the strong support of his wife, Gwen Albarracin who makes sure the company is run by service-oriented and talented people to deliver top caliber programs to aspiring musicians.

Marketing to music

With 18 branches plus 20 extension classes in schools all over Metro Manila, the music center started in the owner's garage. Often, the cars had to be brought out to the street to give way for classes. The makeshift "classroom" was soon transformed into the Center for Pop Music through the passion of Butch Albarracin to develop a voice and stage performance program. "Since this started as a family business, the division of responsibilities between my husband and I just fell into place based on our interest and the need at that moment. My husband was very happy and fulfilled in developing the voice and stage performance program and passing this training on to the coaches of the various bran ches and eventually developing a coaches' academy," says Gwen Albarracin.

While eager students belted high notes in their garage, Gwen Albarracin was honing her skills in marketing at the Magnolia Corporation where she worked her way up from product manager to senior product manager and then to group product manager. As Albarracin extended her marketing and managerial expertise to international operations for Magnolia as market planning manager, the school was steadily growing. Eventually, there was no other way to go but to develop the school in a music coaching academy.

In 1992, she decided to leave Magnolia to help her husband develop the Center for Pop Music Philippines. "At that time no one was looking into the organizational chart and preparing it for growth. So I challenged myself and I developed a passion to 'professionalize' the operations of CPMP by developing a cohesive operations system that will encourage and facilitate exchange of ideas between managers and subordinates," recalls Albarracin.

Establishing the school

As executive vice president and chief operating officer of Center for Pop Music Philippines, Albarracin directs and controls the functions of the HRD administration division and the finance division. In other words, within the organization, she handles the people business. "Our main product is our training program and you have to have service-oriented people and talented people to deliver this program to the end customer while encouraging feedback from clients. Getting this feedback is what we value most because this encourages everyone to do their best and this helps us to improve and continually reinvent ourselves."

More than the people business, she extended her scope to help establish the school further. "I also have a shared responsibility in the marketing division with my husband because we both are marketing graduates." She broadened the services of the school and opened programs for keyboard lessons, guitar lessons, stage pop dancing, ballroom dancing and visual art lessons. Using her marketing background, Albarracin developed joint programs for music appreciation and application with several schools, colleges and universities all over the country.

With Albarracin's help, the center also opened the Concert Division for upcoming singers, the Stars and Events Division that books star products and supplys the production requirements of events, and the Party Highlights that manages parties like debuts and weddings. She also handles Learnax, the division that handles seminars and workshops such as emceeing, hosting and show production.

Equation of success

Albarracin's goal for the company is to develop a culture of mutual support and respect. "Respect comes from knowing that each person is a unique individual and accepting this while inspiring all to give their best with the end goal of quality service and customer delight," she shares. She takes the people business seriously because she believes quality service and success stem from hiring the right people. "I love the challenge of hiring good people. People are hired because of good qualifications but they have to leave because of a bad attitude. Being a good employee is not only having the skill and intelligence that the job requires but it involves a good character and personality to work with and for people."

The marketing expert and LiaCom graduate achieves and promotes good employee relations by brushing up on her psychology subjects, attending seminars and reading books. "My goal as a professional is to keep on learning. In learning, there is humility and this helps me become a better HRD practitioner." As an HR professional, she also believes in empowerment through participative management. She makes it a point that her people are involved in planning and decision-making.

ALBARRACIN AUGUST DELA CRUZ

"When we involve our subordinates in planning, ideas develop and evolve into a great idea. This idea no longer belongs to just one person but of the team." By knowing that they are making significant contributions to the company, the people gain a valuable sense of fulfillment.

A double magna cum laude in Marketing and Psychology at St. Scholastica's College, Albarracin further enhanced her marketing background when she took units in graduate studies on International Marketing at the Boston College. She successfully fuses psychology, arts, management and marketing to come up with an equation for success. Her Mother Brigitta Corp. Award for Leadership and the Pope John XXIII Award for Civic Leadership validate her equation. She was also selected as one of the Most Outstanding Coed by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports. But more than the trophies and medals on her shelf, what truly defines Albarracin's success is the countless people she has helped grow into better individuals, both under the limelight and in the backstage.

Why work...

From page 8

very high EQ, IQ and technical skills to handle these stresses. Inbound agents have to give information and respond to complaints about the products and service of their clients. These irate customers are frustrated with the product or service, and ventilate their anger on the agent who is not allowed to give any hostile remark even if the customer uses provoking and insulting language. Agents should expect to be called "stupid!" "idiot" "BS!" and the like. They are trained how to respond to abusive language by assertively telling the customer not to use these words again, and if he or she still does, by transferring the line to their supervisor.

The agents interviewed for this article perceive American customers to be very demanding and to have the "I'm OK-You're not OK" mindset even if the problem they have with a product or service stems from their own faulty use of it.

Another source of stress for an agent is maintaining their "call handling time," i.e., the length of time they are expected to resolve a problem. In their effort to manage their call handling time, which is normally pegged at three minutes, agents are faced with the frustration of not being able to help the customer at all. Efficiency is measured in terms of using only three minutes to respond to a customer while effectiveness has to do with how satisfied the customer is with their response or solution.

A big source of difficulty for agents is the work schedule. The graveyard shift is frequently the reason there is a high turnover of call center agents. It takes a toll on the health of the agents, robs them of a normal lifestyle because they are awake when the rest of the world are sleeping, and sleeping when others are awake. Working the graveyard shift also poses the danger of

WHY/P. 6

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Save our families

ILLUSTRATION BY ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

By Bishop Precioso D. Cantillas, SDB, DD

THE GOSPEL narrative about Joseph, Mary and the Child Jesus—the whole family being forced to leave home and flee to Egypt because of the threat of Herod on the life of the Child—reminds me of the many families of the overseas Filipino workers (OFW) whose "life" is receiving some kind of "threat." Both the World Conference of OFWs 2004 and the OFW Family Day, which I attended recently in Manila, highlight among many things, the woes, sufferings, and many other adverse effects of migrant labor on families. A recent study done on families and children of the OFWs confirms the irony that the family and its welfare—the very reason for the Filipinos to work abroad—becomes at the same time the very victim of labor migration, a costly price the worker has to pay. What could help to protect our OFWs and their families against the danger of the destruction of the family?

The example of the Holy Family should inspire all families of workers particularly the OFWs to include the element of faith in the work situation. Joseph "migrated" to Egypt in obedience to God's will made known to him by the angel, and so that the Child-Messiah would live. Working abroad or even here should also be understood as our way of doing God's will in our lives and not just as our way of earning for our needs and those of our families. Money and material things should not be the over-riding reason for our work. The awareness—that our life comes from God and what we do with it, our work, is our gift to God—will guide us in our decisions on our work and will save our families from destruction of all kinds. *(E-mail the author at* mfvg@skyinet.net.)

REFLECTIONS FOR THE WORKING SOUL

Gospel: Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled...

Feeling threatened

By Teresa R. Tunay, OCDS

TODAY'S Gospel is reminiscent of a very real situation in many workplaces: a superior who feels threatened by a bright subordinate. Herod wanted all male infants killed because of jealousy: he was afraid of being dethroned by the King of Kings.

One of the most destructive presences in the workplace is a Herod-boss who is so insecure as a superior that he wouldn't let anyone beneath him get the limelight lest he be consigned to the shadows. More often than not, this boss lacks competence and is motivated by less-than-noble reasons. He, most likely, uses his subordinates to glorify himself—extracting ideas from them and passing them off as his own, making them work like horses but never acknowledging their contribution, etc. He is so comfortable in his power groove that he gets threatened when he cannot subjugate somebody smart among his "hirelings." Afraid of change, the Herod-boss glued to the commander's seat is one of the chief reasons a company gets stuck in mediocrity—his ego-driven hand strangles fresh concepts and stifles creativity.

What causes this kind of superior to feel threatened by upcoming brilliance? He may have been guided by high-mindedness before but soon became a slave to the power that got into his head until he believed he could never be wrong. A leader with unquestionable competence and who is guided by the highest principles, by service instead of selfishness, is not afraid of being "unseated," because he recognizes the truth that he, like everyone else, is but an instrument of—and for—the Highest Good. *(E-mail the author at* teresa_de_manila@yahoo.com)

How do you make it through the hiring minefield?

DEAR WW: A friend in human resources recently told me about how most companies use computers to screen resumés. I had no idea that people weren't screening resumés. What else don't I know about the hiring process and what can I do to survive it?
Screened Out

ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAVO

Recently, I read about a California law where anyone could complain about your driving and DMV would hold a hearing where you could ultimately lose your license. The law was created for the concerned families of elderly drivers. However, the law was poorly written and leaves the door open for anyone to challenge your license, good reason or not.

It's no different in the hiring process at most companies. Many different people and computers along the way can challenge your ability to do the job and end your chances of being hired. To improve your survival odds, I've outlined below the four hiring stages used by most companies and what you need to know to survive each. For more information, check out Ron Fry's book, "101 Greatest Answers to Toughest Interview Questions" (Career Press, 2000).

How do you get past the computer scan of your resumé? At many companies the initial screening of resumés is done by computers. That's why it's important to read the job announcement carefully and to load up on the same keywords that are emphasized in the text. Also cut out the colored paper and fancy fonts to keep your resumé scanner-friendly.

How do you survive the telephone interview? The most important thing to know about the telephone interview is that most phone interviewers are more focused on eliminating candidates than finding great people to hire. Focus on how you meet the requirements of the job and don't volunteer any information that could confuse or make your interviewer nervous.

WORKING WOUNDED

Bob Rosner

How do you survive your first face-to-face interview? Congratulations. You've actually got a human being sitting across the table from you. Since they're probably in human resources, chances are that they'll be mainly focused on how you meet the job's qualifications. It's fine to ask them general questions about the company and the job, but remember this is probably not the most knowledgeable person to grill about the job's day-to-day realities.

How do you get the person who you'll actually be working for to pick you? Chances are that the manager who will actually hire you is more concerned about your attitude and how you'll fit in than how you fit each of the job's qualifications. So remember at this stage that your intangibles are often as important as your resumé and experience. Also, most managers are more pressed for time than the human resources people that you've been talking to up until now. Get a feel for how rushed the manager is and adjust the length of your answers accordingly.

Have a specific plan for each stage of the hiring process and you'll be safe in the drivers' seat.

Here are the results from a recent workingwounded.com/ABCnews.com online ballot: What are the most important to a company hiring a new employee?

—Writing skills, 1.1 percent

—Organizational skills, 7.4 percent

—Leadership skills, 9.4 percent

—Interpersonal skills, 37.6 percent

—Problem-solving skills, 44.2 percent

(Mr. Rosner, an internationally syndicated columnist, author and speaker, is based in Seattle, Washington, USA. E-mail him at bob@workingwounded.com.)

Why work for a call center?

By Josie O. Santamaria

ASK YOUR CAREER COUNSELOR

(Last Dec. 12, 2004, the column of Ms Santamaria, in response to a letter, tackled call centers, the job of customer service representatives or CSRs and the industry's recruitment process. The following is a continuation of the column.)

THE TRAINING given to newly hired customer service representatives is designed to make the new agent competent and self-confident in managing and controlling inbound and outbound calls to and from English-speaking Americans living in the US. Inbound calls are made by Americans seeking more information or complaining about products or services they are using. Outbound calls are made by agents to a list of prospects in the US to sell the client's product or service.

Every call that the agent makes is recorded and evaluated by a group in the company known as quality assurance, which gives feedback to the agent on his or her delivery, clarity and effectiveness or in effect, whether the calls have achieved their purpose.

Rigorous training

A newly hired agent is trained first on how to speak like a native American in terms of diction, pronunciation and accentuation, and how to listen accurately. Heavy slang is a no-no. This training is given for one week, eight hours a day.

Next, the agent is briefed on American culture and geography on the second week. Tests, both written and oral, are given to check the agent's proficiency on this score. Then, on the third week, the agent is oriented on the product. Examples of products are credit cards, all kinds of insurance, telecommunication, utilities, websites, and services such as financial, travel and fitness. The trainees are drilled on everything about the product or service and the company selling these.

Telemarketers, on the other hand, are given additional training on selling skills i.e., how to do a sales pitch and close a sale within a three-minute time frame. Inbound agents are especially trained how to handle different kinds of irate customers with different levels of agitation.

This rigorous training benefits the newly recruited agents in the following ways: they learn life skills (communication—speaking and listening; handling conflict) as well as selling skills, which can be useful in other jobs as well. They also gain self-confidence. And while learning, the trainees get full pay during the training period.

Other requirements

In addition to the above knowledge and skills, an agent is also expected to be proficient in basic computer programs like word processing, e-mail and chatting, and the Internet. The agent must document every call made and received so the typing speed must be at least 25 words per minute. The agent must also be good in multitasking, i.e. the readiness and ability to do different tasks at the same time such as, talking, listening, analyzing and typing. Usually, there are at least three computer software programs simultaneously being used by an agent while talking to a customer.

The following personality traits are a "must" for a customer service agent: high frustration tolerance, big dose of patience, ability not to take "cuss" words personally, high energy level, mental alertness, high sense of urgency, precision and attention to details, and high achievement drive, which refers to one's desire to face challenges and to keep improving one's skills in solving problems.

To be happy and successful as a customer service representative requires three kinds of orientation: people, service and business. To be a people-oriented person means that you like being with and talking to people. Being a service-oriented person means that you like helping people resolve their concerns, solve their problems and keep them happy. To be business-oriented means that you value satisfied and happy customers as your long-term business partners who keep coming back and refer others to your company.

Challenges and benefits

With all these challenges, why should one work as a customer service representative in a call center? For one, there are many job vacancies in call centers. If you meet the qualifications and basic requirements, and pass the various tests, both theoretical and practical, you can easily find a job. Second, the call center provides training and development that can help you develop competence and self-confidence. The knowledge and skills you acquire will serve you throughout your working life and career. In addition, the ability to manage stress, tolerate frustration and help difficult customers with their needs, concerns, problems can develop your personality and character and enhance your emotional quotient (EQ) especially in the area of management of your emotions, sensitivity to the feelings and needs of other people, and providing win-win solutions.

Third, the pay is good. Where else can a college graduate, as a first job, earn from a low of P12,000 to a high of P15,000 per month? Agents earn more if they work in the graveyard shift, and during holidays in the Philippines. Employees enjoy medical and life insurance, paid time off and leaves (sick, vacation, etc.). Also, agents get free meals and transportation allowance.

An intrinsic source of satisfaction is the knowledge that they are helping people, and this includes the irate customers, with their problems. The agents can also experience a sense of fulfillment for doing a good job, such as satisfying a customer's needs and receiving a "pat on the back" from the customer, from their team leader and from the quality assurance people who monitor all calls.

Another plus factor in working at a call center is that agents work with people of their own age, i.e., young people between 20 to 30 years of age. Even employees who are older in years are youthful, energetic and helpful to younger employees. There are also activities that bring employees together for fun such as out-of-town trips, company-paid buffet lunch in a good restaurant, and other activities that appeal to young people. Also, call centers have no dress codes, so employees can wear any attire to work that is comfortable to them.

Work environment

The offices of call centers are usually big, modern, equipped with state-of-the-art computer and telecommunications equipment and well-maintained to provide comfort and relaxation to a big number of employees. At the same time, the color of the walls and ceilings are bright enough to stimulate the mind and keep it alert.

Most call centers have clients providing 24-hour service for their customers who can call a 1–800 toll free number at any time. This means there are at least three shifts of agents. The shifts are broken into the morning shift and the graveyard shift. Newly recruited agents are always given the graveyard shift of 11 or 12 p.m. to 8 or 9 a.m. This involves a major adjustment of their body clocks and one of the major reasons for fast turnover of agents.

An eight-hour shift includes lunch and coffee breaks. A five-day workweek is observed but days off do not necessarily mean a Saturday and a Sunday. The schedule given to an agent, and which is often non-negotiable, will indicate his or her days off.

Problems and concerns

Providing customer service to people you don't interact with face-to-face but only through voice is stressful enough but dealing with those who shout and use foul language can be infuriating. An agent needs to have a

WHY/P.7

What's inside

HR Focus: *Gwen Albarracin of Center for Pop Music* p. 7

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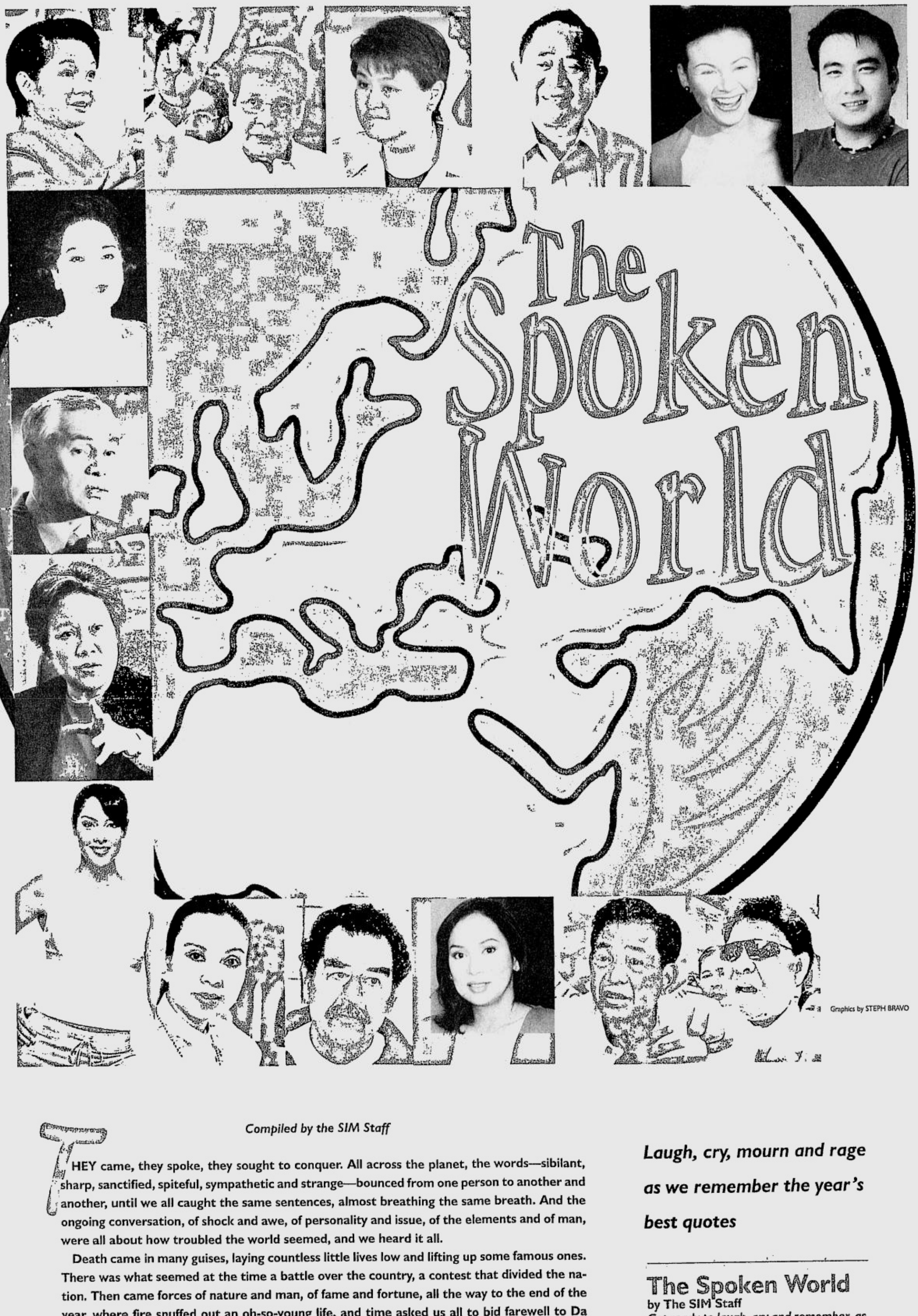
sunday INQUIRER magazine
GET TO KNOW SOME REAL PEOPLE



Graphics by STEPH BRAVO

The Spoken World

Compiled by the SIM Staff

Laugh, cry, mourn and rage as we remember the year's best quotes

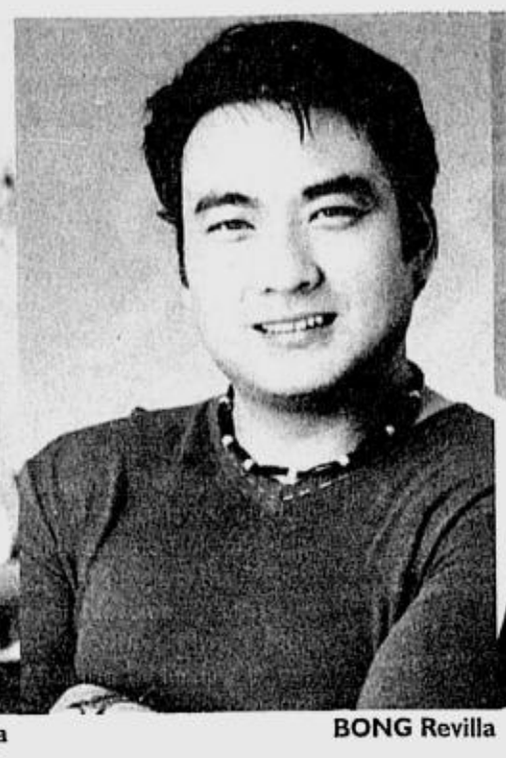
THEY came, they spoke, they sought to conquer. All across the planet, the words—sibilant, sharp, sanctified, spiteful, sympathetic and strange—bounced from one person to another and another, until we all caught the same sentences, almost breathing the same breath. And the ongoing conversation, of shock and awe, of personality and issue, of the elements and of man, were all about how troubled the world seemed, and we heard it all.

Death came in many guises, laying countless little lives low and lifting up some famous ones. There was what seemed at the time a battle over the country, a contest that divided the nation. Then came forces of nature and man, of fame and fortune, all the way to the end of the year, where fire snuffed out an oh-so-young life, and time asked us all to bid farewell to Da King. Here, with SIM's selection of the best quotes of the year, join us as we laugh, mourn, rage and, most of all, listen:

Ruel S. De Vera

The Spoken World
by The SIM Staff
Get ready to laugh, cry and remember, as SIM brings you the best quotes of 2005

LOREN Legarda



BONG Revilla

MIRIAM Defensor-Santiago

JUAN Ponce Enrile

JANUARY

"We need leaders who will put the national interest above the personal interest and who will not steal the country blind."

—Senator **Loren Legarda,** accepting the offer to become Fernando Poe Jr.'s running mate in the upcoming May polls

"If we consider that, on average, five people lived in each house, we can say the death toll will reach 50,000."

—A senior **Iranian Interior Ministry official**, after a December 26 ,2003 earthquake leveled the ancient city of Bam

"We're still hoping for a united opposition and we have one whole month to work on that. We have not given up. We can still afford to be hopeful."

—Ex-Senator **Francisco "Kit" Tatad**, on the rift between opposition forces after Legarda was announced as a VP bet

"For as long as you do your job well as a politician, I don't see any problem, even if you make movies as an actor."

—Actor and senatorial bet **Ramon "Bong" Revilla, Jr.**, on his conviction to keep making movies even if he wins in the 2004 elections

"We respect Poe's decision to pick her as his running mate but we could not forget her role in the Estrada ouster."

—**Arnold Obina** of the pro-Estrada People's Alliance for Truth and Justice, on why the group is demanding a public apology before they decide to support Legarda

"Miko will do anything to make you laugh, even at his own expense. Thank you, Miko, for making this world a better place."

—**Ali Sotto**, bidding farewell at the funeral of son, young actor Miko Sotto, who fell to his death from a Mandaluyong City condominium

"Although I don't agree with some of his choices, I fully respect his decision."

—Ex-Pres. **Joseph Estrada**, on his friend FPJ's senatorial choices

"FPJ revealed his fatal flaw. So new, so inexperienced and now so lost."

—Ex-Sen. **Miriam Defensor-Santiago** on FPJ

"Just give me tea."

—**Sharhrbanou Mazandarani**, the 98-year-old survivor of the quake in Bam, Iran, after being pulled out of the rubble and going without food or water for eight days

"Yes, I am a Filipino."

—**Fernando Poe Jr.**, responding to accusations that he was not a Filipino citizen and thus ineligible to run in the elections

"Walking down the aisle and seeing him."

—**Lea Salonga**, on the highlight of her wedding to businessman Robert Chien in Los Angeles

"To seek a seat in the Senate now would be an enterprise dictated by the terms of the times instead of other dreams."

—Ilocos Norte Rep. **Imee Marcos**, declining an invitation from the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino to be part of its Senate slate

"While I am a close friend of Erap's, *ang pagkakaalam ko* (as far as I know) there are no identical DNAs."

—**FPJ**, saying on the campaign trail that he is no Estrada clone.

"While we are happy that the realization of the recovery of the Marcos ill-gotten wealth is at hand, we are deeply worried. We fear that the money will go instead to the campaign."

—**Marie Hilao-Enriquez**, chair of the Samahan ng mga Ex-Detainees Laban sa Detensyon at para sa Amnestiya, on fears that the $683 million Marcos Swiss deposits would be used to fund Macapagal-Arroyo's reelection bid

"The ministry has decided to kill all chickens in these epidemic zones."

—Vietnamese agriculture official **Dau Ngoc Hao**, on the order to slaughter millions of chickens in 12 regions stricken by a bird flu epidemic

"It's going to be a long journey for me. It's a dream come true."

—Ateneo forward **Rich Alvarez**, after having been selected the top pick in the 2004 PBA Rookie Draft

"Americans traveling to or residing in the Philippines are urged to exercise great caution and maintain heightened security awareness."

—The **US State Department**, renewing a warning on terrorist threats in the Philippines

"In 1965, we have Ferdinand fighting a Macapagal (President Diosdado Macapagal, who lost). Now, we have Fernando fighting another Macapagal."

—Senatorial candidate **Juan Ponce Enrile**, comparing FPJ to the former dictator

"We have implanted the first embryo two weeks ago."

—Fertility specialist **Panayiotis Zavos**, claiming he had implanted a cloned human embryo in a woman's womb

"Politicians have abused and betrayed people power."

—Manila Auxiliary **Bishop Socrates Villegas**, on the nation three years after the events of Edsa II

"If I were engaged in something sub rosa or plotting political motives, it would be very absurd for me to be so careless in the manner they described."

—National Archives Director **Ricardo Manapat**, on allegations he fabricated documents to discredit Poe's Filipino citizenship

"We feel we are not at liberty to finally declare whether or not the respondent is a natural-born Filipino citizen."

—**Comelec decision**, dismissing a disqualification case against Poe

"I don't think weapons of mass destruction existed."

—American head of the Iraq Survey Group **David Kay**, as he quit his post

"We suspect they are really going to disqualify him before the Supreme Court. I'm warning them not to do that, lest there will be civil war, revolution or massive civil disobedience."

—**Estrada**, on what would happen if FPJ is barred from running

"I ask Democrats everywhere to join us so we can defeat George W. Bush and the economy of privilege."

—American Sen. **John Kerry**, after winning the New Hampshire primary

"The peso is weak because of month-end corporate requirements, accompanied by all this nonsense like talk of a coup and rumors of no-elections. These political noises are unsettling the market."

—Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor **Rafael Buenaventura**, after the peso plunged to a then-new low of P56.01 to a dollar

"The message is clear. The Philippines is free from bird flu. This is our way of telling people that it's safe to eat chicken here."

—Health Secretary **Manuel Dayrit**, while eating fried chicken at a press briefing

"He never blinked against the dictatorship, and when it was necessary to fully unite the political opposition, Doy displayed true statesmanship and set aside his own dream to be president."

—Vice President **Tito Guingona**, on the passing of former Vice President Salvador "Doy" Laurel on Jan. 27 in California

FEBRUARY

"It's a non-issue because it's the truth. *Hindi namin ito itinatago* (We're not hiding it)."

—**FPJ**, after publicly acknowledging that he has a son, Ronian, with actress Ana Marin

"It's not enough to be a man of the masses without a brain and not enough for a brain without a heart for the masses. A candidate must possess both, and I'm lucky to have both virtues."

—**Legarda**, suggesting that rival VP bet Sen. Noli de Castro lacked the smarts for the post

"I want to see their faces when they die because they did not only kill my daughters, they also raped them."

—**Thelma Chiong**, after the Supreme Court meted out the death penalty to six of the seven men accused of killing Chiong's two daughters

"We never get it right when we practice this, but this went to perfection."

—Mars program chief engineer **Rob Manning**, after the Spirit rover spacecraft successfully landed and began sending signals from the surface of the planet Mars

"If the political and economic situations in the country do not improve, I don't have a choice but to leave and live abroad. All I can think about is the welfare of my kids."

—Actor **Aga Muhlach**, on what would make him decide to leave behind his career

"Some want me out but I am a stubborn public servant and will continue to serve the Comelec."

—Commission on Elections Chair **Benjamin Abalos**, saying that he would not resign his post despite a survey stating that many Filipinos did not trust him

"What occurred was unintentional, completely regrettable and I apologize if you guys were offended."

—American pop star **Justin Timberlake**, apologizing at the Grammy Awards for the "wardrobe malfunction" that exposed Janet Jackson's breast at the halftime show for Superbowl on Feb . 1

"I used to look up to him as 6'2" tall. Now, he is not even two inches tall."

—Alyansa ng Pag-asa presidential aspirant **Raul Roco**, deploring Sen. Rodolfo Biazon's defection to the administration K-4 coalition

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Sunday Inquirer Magazine December 26, 2004
Vol. 18 No. 43 ISSN 0116 - 232X

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NEW YEAR'S EVE SPECIALS

Await the 12 midnight chime at The Richmonde Hotel Lobby's Countdown Celebration with live entertainment from Joey Bautista and Girl Valencia and bubbly drinks and hors d'oeuvres overflowing from 9:30 p.m. onwards. A hearty and scrumptious dinner buffet awaits diners at the Grill. For reservations, call 638-7777.

WORTH A READ

I now reside here in Ontario, Canada with my husband and four kids. We arrived in Canada last April 2004.

I was reading the INQUIRER website and came across the article under "Pinoy Connection" ("Their Canadian Dream—or Nightmare?," **SIM**, 12 December 2004). I just want to say that the article is worth reading for all Filipinos, especially for those *kababayans* of ours who have intentions of applying as immigrants to work here in Canada.

More power to the Sunday INQUIRER.

CHITT SANTIAGO
clsantiago@rogers.com

A DOG HEAVEN

Darn it, you got me teary-eyed there, that was a good one ("There Must Be A Dog Heaven," **SIM**, 5 December 2004). Reminds me of my Bamba, my dear dog. Thanks so much. Yes, there is indeed a Dog Heaven. I salute you, Ma'am. Be safe.

RONNIE
vozmark@sbcglobal.net

ERRATA:

In the article "The Bee Lady from Bohol" by Congee Gomez (**SIM**, 19 December 2004), it was misstated that Vicky Wallace's grandparents are from Pangasinan. They are actually from Pangangan. It was an editing mistake, and no fault of the author's. **SIM** regrets the error.

In the November 14 issue, the name of writer Myra Gaculais Del Rosario ("Muscling In on A World Championship") was misspelled. **SIM** apologizes for the oversight.

ATTENTION CONTRIBUTORS!

SIM strives to pay our valued contributors within three weeks of publication of an article or poem. However, to facilitate preparation of your fees — and to avoid an unnecessary trip! — please give the Cashier a call at tel. no. 897-8808 local 533 to confirm if your check is ready before visiting. Many thanks and keep them coming!

A Winning Partnership

SMART Entrepreneurial Program@Pampanga

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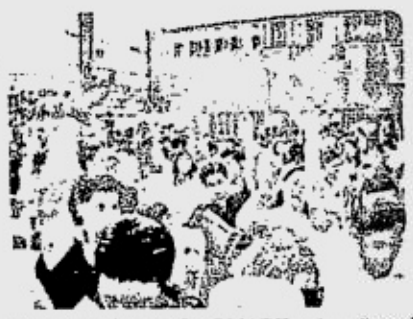
---University President Pama

Arellano Foundation University plays host to SEP Pampanga



A show of hands for SMART subscribers

SMART
Simply Amazing!

SIM Swap booth made available for participants

The biggest SEP event with 901 attendees

A crowded registration booth welcomes invited and walk-in guests

Manny on Entrepreneurship

"Businesses do transform societies. They not only shape our physical and our virtual worlds, but also create new needs, new hopes, and new dreams."

-- Manuel V. Pangilinan,
PLDT and SMART Chairman

It's not just about the innovations we bring...

It's about the opportunities we provide.

The SMART Entrepreneurial Program or SEP reaches Pampanga in its biggest event to date. 901 students from all over Pampanga and Metro Manila gathered in the Angeles Foundation University for a whole day affair that gave students and graduates alike a glimpse into the world of entrepreneurship. For University President Pama, this partnership with SMART is a win-win situation where the company and the students benefit from the initiatives of each one.

With a holding capacity of 1200 people, the school gymnasium was a good choice of venue. Expecting only 500-600 students, both the SMART organizers and faculty members were very much surprised and gladdened by the huge turnout. Out of the 901 attendees, 639 were graduates and only 262 were still studying. A text broadcast was done in preparation of the event and even then the interest of young housewives, recent graduates, and even working folks were seen via their inquiries and responses.

Crowd favorites were Mr. Butch Bartolome's talk on "How to Start A Business" and the SEP module, which presented SMART's answer on how each one can begin to become an entrepreneur. Participants were surprised at how easy it was to earn your own capital while countless others were inspired to begin something of their own. For the undergrads a job fair was held after the series of talks. Here, they got to submit their resumes to companies like E-Global Voice, Cyber City, and SMART. Students like Lyndon, Zeia, and Erby are engineering students certain that SEP will help prepare them for future challenges may it be in employment or entrepreneurship.

For SEP, this mutual show of confidence in the program and in the students and schools that support them is what a winning partnership is all about.

ROSANNA Roces

EDDIE Gil

FPJ

BE

Quotes ...from page 2

"Whoever said that, I'm calling them liars."

—**Biazon**, disputing claims that he received P30 million to jump parties

"We will make the national pool a very prestigious group to belong to."

—Philippine Sports Commission Chair **Eric Buhain**, on the decision to cut in half the number of athletes in its payroll, from 1,000 to the "Golden 500"

"We were looking for an event to mark Valentine's Day meaningfully."

—Manila Mayor **Lito Atienza**, on the "Close-up Lovapalooza," where 5,122 Filipino couples kissed for 10 seconds in an attempt to break a world record

"Only a charred sculpture of an Igorot man playing the flute remains of the house. It stands by the gate. I lost all my memories in that house."

—Filmmaker **Kidlat Tahimik**, after his Baguio home was razed to the ground in a fire

"The present government must be replaced. We can't afford six more years of Gloria."

—**Roco**, on why GMA should not be reelected

"They came here on their own; they are not being paid."

—Sen. **Vicente "Tito" Sotto** III, one of FPJ's spokesmen, on the celebrities who appear at KNP rallies to endorse Poe

"Over the last four years, Joe has been hailed as the second Ramon Valera. I dare say that Joe Salazar stands on his own as a great Filipino designer."

—Designer **Inno Sotto** on designer Joe Salazar, who passed away Feb. 14

"The peso is being burdened by politics. Our economy remains stable."

—**GMA**, after the peso fell to a then all-time low of P56.36 to a dollar

"The loss of both my mom and Tito Nestor is a big blow to the entertainment industry."

—**Kaye Torres**, daughter of slain actress Nida Blanca, after Blanca's long-time onscreen partner Nestor de Villa, died Feb. 21 at 75

"She came from the Philippines to make it in New York. And of course, with her brains, with her determination, and also with her courage...she made it."

—Rev. **Erno Diaz**, officiating the funeral mass for slain Filipino-American financial analyst Maria Pilar "Pipie" Cruz in New York

"I did not know that it was a baby when it was thrown to me."

—Pregnant **Nelia Tubio**, who caught two-month-old Adrian Amomas in her arms after the child was thrown by his mother to save the infant's life when SuperFerry 14 caught fire in Manila Bay

"While it pains me to do so, I'm looking forward to going abroad and not let the opportunity pass."

—Medical board topnotcher **Elmer Reyes Jacinto**, on his plans to work as a nurse in a New York hospital

MARCH

"We did it!"

—Abu Sayyaf spokesperson **Abu Soliman**, claiming responsibility for the fire that struck SuperFerry 14

"I'm so honored and relieved that the academy and the members of the academy that have supported us have seen past the trolls and the wizards and the hobbits in recognizing fantasy this year."

—Director **Peter Jackson**, whose movie "Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" swept the Oscars with 11 wins

"I feel that she should not think of it that way. What she does on screen does not necessarily reflect her true personality."

—**Pitoy Moreno**, on comments made by sexy actress Juliana Palermo that she was excluded from the list of finalists for the 2004 Bb. Pilipinas because of her onscreen roles

"Finally, I was vindicated."

—**FPJ**, after the Supreme Court voted 8-5 that he was qualified to run in the elections

"FPJ has always said that debates are divisive."

—**Sotto**, as to why FPJ would not engage his opponents in a public debate

"What a beautiful person she was."

—Former President **Corazon Aquino**, on the passing of Time Magazine foreign correspondent emeritus Sandra Burton

"I will appeal the verdict and continue to fight to clear my name, I believe in the fairness of the judicial system and remain confident that I will eventually prevail."

—American lifestyle icon **Martha Stewart** on her website, after she was found guilty of lying to investigators on a sale of stock

"It doesn't matter how many times you fall. What matters is how well you stand after that fall."

—Bb. Pilipinas Universe **Maricar Balagtas**, who won the title on her third try

"*Ako pa*? (Who, me?) I've been offered reimbursements of my campaign costs by someone close to FPJ, and I told them I don't deal in concessions and reimbursements."

—Senator **Panfilo "Ping" Lacson**, on why he could not see himself uniting with the FPJ faction

"If that is what truth requires, so be it."

—National Archives employee **Remmel Talabis**, asked if his job would be imperiled by his saying that the documents casting doubts on FPJ's citizenship had been doctored

"We have what we believe is the most potent group of economists and planners that can be formed."

—Rep. **Francis Escudero**, FPJ campaign spokesman, on FPJ's 19-man economic advisory team

"I want every Filipino to watch this film because there is a promise here, there is meaning. Maybe God is trying to tell us something."

—Manila Archbishop **Gaudencio Rosales**, on Mel Gibson's movie "The Passion of the Christ"

"We do not buy votes, we buy health care. They cannot call this politicking because it is part of our mandate, and we started this program two years ago."

—PhilHealth president **Francisco Duque**, defending the distribution of health insurance cards that bore GMA's image

"This is about fighting for the return to moral governance and the search for a leader who is his own person, one who is sincere and has native intelligence, one who is prepared to exercise political will to chart meaningful reforms to rebuild our nation under God."

—Vice President **Teofisto Guingona**, formally announcing his acceptance of FPJ's offer to become the candidate's adviser

"This sort of insensitivity to the dignity of women and their continued degradation, particularly in advertising products and services, hurts the sensibilities of the Filipina woman."

—Bishop **Emilio Marquez** of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines Office on Women, expressing outrage over Napoleon Brandy's "Kinse Anyos" ads

"We declare our responsibility for what happened in Madrid. It is in response to your collaboration with the criminals Bush and his allies."

—An alleged **Al Qaeda operative** speaking in Arabic on a videotape, claiming responsibility for the bombings in Mardid that killed 200 people

"All told, as logic will tell us, it is inevitable to conclude that the respondent is not a stranger to the games of charlatans and impostors."

—**Comelec** decision declaring Eddie Gil a nuisance candidate and disqualifying him from running

"I have the capacity to campaign anywhere, even throughout the world, not only in the Philippines."

—**Gil**, after tearing up a copy of the decision

"This is not the first time that the Viva Hot babes violated MTRCB rules and regulations, so we finally decided to take a stand."

—Movie and Television Ratings and Classification Board chair **Marissa Laguardia**, suspending Hot Babe Asia Agcaoli for 20 days after the performer accidentally exposed a breast during a variety show dance number

"Superb!"

—"American Idol" judge **Simon Cowell**, describing Fil-Am contestant Jasmine Trias' performance of "Inseparable"

"We have high school students who can't cope with the demand of the high school curriculum."

—Department of Education official **Corazon Echano** on the five-year high school "bridge program" that would add a year to the existing high school program

APRIL

"The queue is long, we will not run out of bombers."

—Abu Sayyaf's **Khadaffy Janjalani**, after the Superferry bombing that killed at least 100 people

"So many straight politicians are dragged into sex scandals, yet their heterosexual excesses are not questioned."

—**Michael Urbano** of the Progressive Organization of Gays in the Philippines (PROGAY), after a sex worker accused senatorial candidate John Osmeña of rape

"Life is in itself an experience, and I think I have been a survivor."

—**FPJ** on GMA's exhortation of the public to vote for a candidate with experience

"*Ang pikon, talo.* (If you lose your cool, you lose)."

—**Raul Roco**, on news that FPJ had lashed out at reporter Sandra Aguinaldo

"It's about time I speak out about my husband's abuses."

—**Melissa Martel**, who filed frustrated homicide charges against husband Robby Martel, scion of the Harrison Plaza family after he shot her in the stomach

"I am just so happy that I made it this far. The most important thing I learned from the show is to be true to myself."

—**Jasmine Trias**, after surviving the fourth round of the "American Idol" amateur singing competition, where fellow Fil-Am Camille Velasco was eliminated.

"Hello, idol! Good afternoon! Can you be one of my wedding sponsors?"

—Rep. **Francis Escudero** on the first time he ever spoke to the actor-presidential contender

"Absolutely. Tell it to the people. Tell it to the wind."

—**Roco** on whether he was pushing through with his presidential bid after news that he was seriously ill

"One thing is very sure: I am happy and proud to be a Filipino and will always be."

—Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer **Cheryl Diaz Meyer**, on a trip back home to Legazpi City

"After what happened with the other show, I know I have to stop and think before talking."

—**Willie Revillame**, on learning his lesson af-

GRACE Padaca

WILLIE Revillame

PIA Cayetano

ARCHBISHOP Gaudencio Rosales

NJAMIN Abalos

NESTOR Sulpico

CHERYL Diaz-Meyer

TITO Sotto

RAUL Roco

ter being suspended for offensive banter on ABS-CBN's noontime show "MTB"

"Like all things, only time and God can tell when we will go."
—Rep. **Bobby Dimaporo** after the death of his father, Lanao kingpin Ali Dimaporo

"You don't need hundreds of thousands of pesos to win."
—**Leandro Catarata**, candidate for Mayor of Valencia City, Bukidnon, who campaigned with P30,000 and sacks of *camote*, bananas, rice and corn

"Because of this, I will be president. They have been oppressing me, and those who made the decision wll be punished by God."
—Presidential wanna-be **Eddie Gil**, after the Supreme Court upheld the Comelec ruling that declared him a nuisance candidate.

"This kind of weather is perfect."
—Tenor **Andrea Bocelli**, after arriving in Manila for a one-night concert

"He died the way he wanted to—peacefully and without having to be hospitalized or attended to by a doctor... He was allergic to doctors."
—**Cecile Joaquin Yasay** on the death of her uncle, National Artist Nick Joaquin

MAY

"I hope those who are planning to cheat will change their minds once they see these people."
—Bro. **Eddie Villanueva** at a huge rally for him on Ayala Avenue

"I don't need a man to make me happy."—Actress **Judy Ann Santos**, announcing that she would have a baby at age 29 (she is 26)

"I'll go shopping till I drop."
—Golfer **Jennifer Rosales** on winning P13 million and her first LPGA title

"We have only just started to come out of a particularly bad patch, and now this."
—A **Boracay hotel owner** after news of the murder of three foreigners on the island

"I know that this would cause alarm, but the missing ballots are not enough to make or unmake a presidential candidiate."
—Comelec Chair **Abalos** after 2,500 ballots were stolen from the National Printing Office

"I told him I was sorry for the humiliation suffered by the Iraqi prisoners."
—US President **George W. Bush** on what he told Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, whom he refused to sack after the incident

"If I received that much money, then I would have been able to pay all my debts."
—**Nora Aunor** on allegations that she received P6.2 million for "services rendered" to the Philippine government during the election campaign

"It's good news to the people. It's good news to the coconut farmers."
—PCGG chair **Haydee Yorac** after the Sandiganbayan awarded to the government 27 percent of shares in San Miguel Corporation, taken from former SMC Chair Danding Cojuangco

"His countrymen should be very proud of what Pacquiao did here today."
—Manny Pacquiao's American promoter **Murad Muhammad** after the Filipino boxer's fight against Mexican champion Juan Manuel Marquez ended in a split draw

"My house was one big funeral parlor. Pity the loser. I experienced that. You feel terrible."
—Speaker **Jose de Venecia**, recalling the 1998 presidential election, when he ran and lost

"They've been at it since early this morning, offering as much as P500 per registered voter."
—**Rolando Lim**, a voter in Lamitan, Basilan, on rampant vote-buying during the elections

"For now, a sober effort to get the country going should be the agenda of every Filipino."
—**Roco**, after becoming the first candidate to concede to GMA

"Since I had to encounter a lot of trials and obstacles, I became a stronger person."
—**Ma. Gracia Padaca**, elected governor of Isabela, who toppled a 30-year political dynasty

"Feeling his life unraveling, Sef set in train a plan to murder his parents and his sister."
—Prosecutor **Mark Tedeschi** on Sef Gonzales, found guilty of the murder of his family in Australia

"We are certain that you are aware that lesbian and homosexual relationships are an abnormality of human nature."
—**MTRCB statement** scolding the show "The Buzz" for airing a lesbian wedding

"I felt insulted by the way the letter was worded, which I considered a personal attack on my being gay. Since when has a promise of love been promiscuous, unfriendly and offensive on prime time television?"
—**Boy Abunda**, host of "The Buzz"

"It's like having them both with me wherever I go."
—Elected Senator **Pia Cayetano**, on why she wears a locket with a picture of her late father Rene Cayetano and her late infant son Gabriel

"If you can't beat them, join them. That's why, with the help of some friends, I'm coming out wth a book of my quotes. There's nothing like the original."
—**Melanie Marquez**

"Shut up. You're wasting our time. Taxpayers of the Philippines."
—**Suzette Pido**, in a note she sent to Rep. Didagen Dilangalen during a joint canvasing session

"Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!"
Dilangalen to Rep. Raul Gonzalez

"Jollibee is a success story based on solid foundations, not a meteor that will burn itself out."
—**Howard Stevenson**, chair of the judging panel at the World Entrepreneur Awards, when Jollibee President Tony Tan Caktiong was declared Entrepreneur of the Year

"I know in my heart that he won."
—**Susan Roces** on FPJ

"I would kill to protect my family. Why did they drag my daughter, who is a minor, into a controversy that was meant to hurt me?"
—Actress **Rosanna Roces**, on rumors that her daughter Grace was pregnant

JUNE

"I don't want a complicated life. When I marry, I will be faithful to my wife."
—**Oyo Boy Sotto**, promising he won't be like his father, Vic Sotto, who has children by different women

"She pictured me as a hoax and a mere aerobics instructor incompetent to conduct cosmetic procedures."
—**Dr. Vicki Belo** in a P10 million libel suit against Rosanna Roces, who accused her of botching a liposuction job

"I thank Sen. Barbers for being a gentleman."
—Sen. **Rodolf Biazon**, after he beat Robert Barbers to become the 12th place senator

"I am an upright man with deep moral convictions."
—**Mike Arroyo**, after filing multiple charges against people and publications who accused him of election offenses

"A judge should never allow himself to be moved by pride, prejudice, passion or pettiness in the performance of his duties."
—**The Supreme Court**, after sacking Judge Jose Caoibes Jr. for improprieties and abuse of power

"I go to Divisioria. I love it there. I go with my mom."
—**Borgy Manotoc**, on where he goes shopping.

"He brought down the Evil Empire and made the world safer for my children and theirs. For that, I will be forever grateful for his leadership."
—**Oliver North**, former national security aide of former US President Ronald Reagan, upon Reagan's death

"Can you please tell Sen. Pimentel not to delay any more the canvassing?"
—**Jaime Cardinal Sin** to Mrs. Bing Pimentel in a phone conversation, after Pimentel spoke for four hours in congress

"You Eminence, Nene is only seeking the truth."
—**Bing Pimentel** to Cardinal Sin

"I thought she would be imperious. She was funny and charming... I can understand how people allowed her to get away with things."
—Filmmaker **Ramona Diaz** on interviewing Imelda Marcos for the controversial documentary "Imelda"

"There will never be another musician who did as much to break down the perceived walls of musical genres."
—Music producer **Quincy Jones** on the death of "soul man" Ray Charles

"See what proper love and care can do for an animal?"
—**Luis Buenaflor Jr.** of the Animal Kingdom Foundation Inc. (AKFI), on news that Sweet, an *askal* they rescued from a Baguio slaughterhouse, won as Dog of the Year in a competition in the United Kingdom

"My children and I love Philip Salvador, but that doesn't mean that if he gives me that P5 million I will just shut my mouth
—**Cristina Decena**, former lover of the actor, on filing an estafa case against Salvador for owing her P15 million

"A lot of presidential memoirs, they say, are dull and self-serving. I hope mine is interesting and self-serving."
—Former US President **Bill Clinton** on his book "My Life"

"The nails were not placed there as a mere prank. The suspects intended to immobilize the roads."
—MMDA Chair **Fernando**, after some 133 cars blew their tires when spikes were scattered all over Edsa

"Korean soldiers, please get out of here. I don't want to die. I don't want to die."
—**Kim Sun-Il**, Korean translator who was beheaded on film by Islamic militants in Baghdad

"This is not a popularity contest. And I'm not representing the Philippines in the Mr. Universe contest, either."
—**Edu Manzano**, chair of the Optical Media Board, on allegations that he is becoming unpopular for his crackdown on fake DVDs

"I disagree that I'm on the wrong side. I'm just not on your side."
—Rep. **Francis Escudero**, to a woman in the Batasang Pambansa gallery who told him he was bright, but "on the wrong side."

"I will not take this sitting down...They should treat senior artists with respect."
—Veteran actress **Celia Rodriguez**, complaining of getting less billing than she deserved for the film "*Naglalayag*"

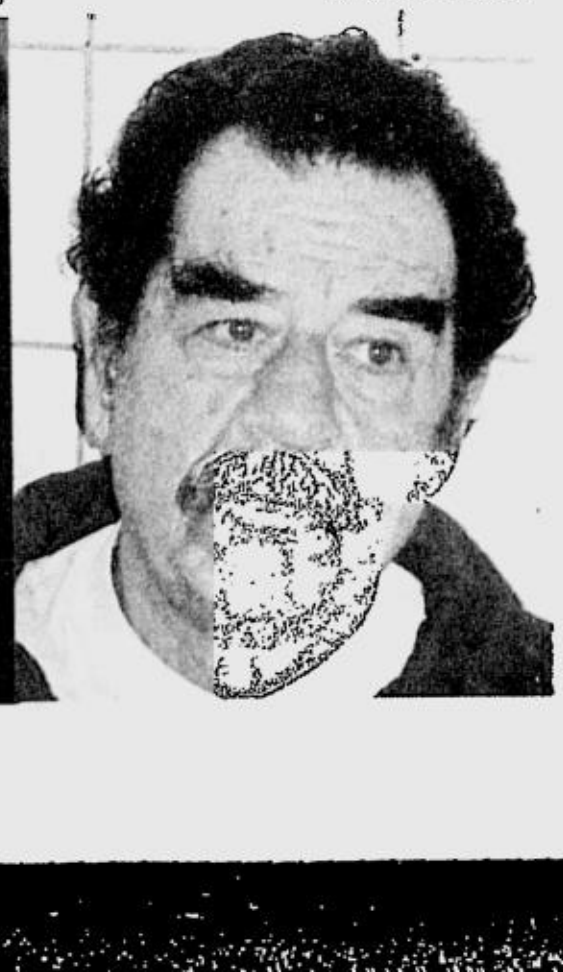
To page 6

DIDAGEN Dilangalen

FRANCIS Escudero

MIKE Arroyo

SADDAM Hussein



CINDY Kurleto

GMA

EDU Manzano

RIO Diaz-Cojuangco

Quotes ...from page 4

JULY

"I'm just walking my talk and talking my walk that I'm *kontra-politika.*"

—Sen. **Jamby Madrigal** on why she attended GMA's inaugural rites on June 30, the only prominent opposition figure to show up

"Would you concede if you know you were cheated?"

—**Legarda**, commenting on the result of the polls at the oath-taking of San Juan mayor, JV Ejercito

"This is all theater, the real criminal is Bush."

—Former Iraqi strongman **Saddam Hussein** in a court appearance July 1 in Baghdad, Iraq, rejecting charges of war crimes and genocides against him

"I will not make an apology."

—Pangasinan Archbishop **Oscar Cruz** when slapped with a libel suit after accusing government gambling agency PAGCOR of sending its female employees allegedly to act as Guest Relations Officer during the birthday celebration of First Gentleman Mike Arroyo

"What's wrong with being a GRO? Does he consider himself an expert on GROs?"

—Pagcor media coordinator **Edward King** on Archbishop Cruz's "GRO" allegations

"She developed a martyr complex combined with the habit of rebellion, a truly deadly combination."

—INQUIRER founder **Eggie Apostol**, describing how a stage role as a martyred Tingguian princess during her high school days influenced her knack for taking on hopeless causes and winning them

"The country's interest is higher than my ego."

—Social Welfare Sec. **Dinky Soliman** after announcing her resignation on July 6 to support Macapagal-Arroyo's "political commitment" to name Vice President Noli de Castro to her post. De Castro, noting the public reaction, later declined the appointment

"I have very strong evidence. I'll see them in court."

—TV host **Kris Aquino** to GMA-7 executives whom she sued over an e-mail sent to columnists by its public relations officer Tet Defensor that criticized her talk show and personality

"A new world record has been set in the 100-meter dash. It was set by Filipino troops fleeing Iraq."

—Late night TV host **Jay Leno**, mocking Macapagal-Arroyo's decision to pull out 51 Filipino troops from Iraq in exchange for Angelo dela Cruz's freedom

"They don't read The New York Times in Mexico, Pampanga."

—Presidential spokesperson **Ignacio Bunye** on why Malacañang chose not to comment on The New York Times' scathing editorial describing the pull out of Filipino troops as "a victory for terrorists"

"Father has lost weight. We'll cook him crispy *pata*."

—**Judith de la Cruz** on news that her father, Angelo de la Cruz, was going to be released 17 days after he was abducted by Iraqi militants

"My mind was reeling. I was so stunned. I said, 'Omigod, it's a treasure trove.'"

—NY cab driver **Nestor Sulpico** upon finding the pearls worth $70,000 left by his passenger. Sulpico, who earns $80 a day, returned the gems and was dubbed by The New York Daily News as "New York's most honest taxi driver"

"He could have used a better-looking weapon. Or at least tried to embellish it. He could have decorated it with yellow ribbons."

—Former First Lady **Imelda Marcos**, recalling the assassination attempt on her by a bolo-wielding man, in the documentary "Imelda" by filmmaker Ramona Diaz

"It was like a glacier breaking up."

—Manila Mayor **Atienza**, of the eight-story Sai building in Divisoria that crashed down six hours after it started to tilt

"I have no reason at all, except that my son died and I was suffering from post traumatic stress disorder and my psychiatrist said that I should try and engage in an activity that will distract me from my personal grief."

—Sen. **Defensor-Santiago** when asked why she ran anew for the Senate after her son committed suicide

"Before we ask a farmer to pay a higher tax on his favorite gin, shouldn't we first remove the tax exemption of surgical procedures for society matrons who want to have a J-Lo butt?"

—Palawan Rep. **Abraham Mitra**, on the government's proposal, to increase taxes on liquor and cigarettes

AUGUST

"This is sacrilege. Nobody should touch a painting without the consent of the artist. I'm still around after all."

—Angono-based muralist and sculptor **Nemi Miranda** on the restoration of the imposing mural of the People Power Revolution at the Edsa Shrine by the Archdiocese of Manila without his permission

"You're now the mother of two boys."

—**Dr. David Staffenberg** to Arlene Aguirre on the successful surgical separation in a New York hospital of her 2-year-old twins Carl and Clarence, who were born with the tops of their heads fused together

"I'm not afraid of you, Mark. Stop provoking me. You are only your father's son."

—**Melanie Marquez** to Pampanga Gov. Mark Lapid, who said in an interview that he might file a case against Marquez for speaking ill of his family

"No feminist debates the fact that Jesus was born a man. Instead, we Catholic feminists cherish Jesus Christ as a feminist man and a sign of the feminine principle in God."

—Akbayan Rep. **Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel** commenting on the Vatican letter written by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, claiming that the feminist movement emphasizes the subordination of women to men to fuel the antagonism between the two sexes

"Please—all the men in the country—so that I don't have to be rude to you, do not attempt to kiss me."

—**GMA** during a Pulong-Bayan in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, after the emcee said a man in the crowd wanted to kiss her but had hesitated because he had not brushed his teeth

"The same-sex marriages authorized by the officials are void and of no legal effect."

—**California Supreme Court** ruling voiding some 4,000 gay weddings previously allowed by San Francisco's young mayor, Gavin Newsom

"I told myself to just let go and trust the one above."

—RP archer **Jasmin Figueroa** who defeated two-time Olympic medallist Natalia Valeeva of Italy in the women's individual competition

"Check the inside of your collar."

—Former Environment Sec. **Elizea Gozun**, saying that a well-funded study has found that air in Metro Manila has become cleaner, a claim disputed by the Health Department

"Nonong is like a bolt coming out from the blue."

—Sen. **Aquilino Pimentel**, on the appointment of former Macapagal-Arroyo counsel Avelino "Nonong" Cruz as Defense Secretary, which he said came as a total surprise

"That is how justice must see, through the eyes of the heart. Feelingly."

—Misamis Occ. Judge **Ma. Nimfa Pena-co-Sitaca** who, with eight other judges, was awarded the Gender Justice Award, for her compassion for women victims of violence

"We are already in the midst of a fiscal crisis and we have to face it squarely."

—**GMA** after 11 faculty members of the UP School of Economics warned that the Philippines is facing a financial meltdown in two to three years unless the government reined in its spending

"This is my biggest break so far."

—Confessed escort girl **Keanna Reeves** on accepting the endorsement and movie offers that came her way after she told a Senate hearing that some politicians have used her services

"Although I have retired, there are still rules that don't allow me to go abroad to receive awards."

—**Dr. Jiang Yanyong**, a military doctor given the 2004 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service for blowing the whistle on China's cover-up of the SARS epidemic. China blocked Jiang's trip to Manila to receive the award

"Finding places where Filipinas are detained for drug-related offenses is a course in geography."

—Bukidnon Rep. **Juan Miguel Zubiri**, citing a Foreign Affairs report showing that a growing number of Filipino women have become drug couriers and are now languishing in foreign jails

"These will probably add up to just a small amount, but it comes from our hearts."

—**Hector Villanueva**, class president of Silliman University's high school class '62, on the batch's decision to donate jewelry to help defray the government's estimated financial deficit of P3 trillion

"It's not the health department's responsibility to provide contraceptives."

—Health Secretary **Manuel Dayrit** when asked to define the government's family planning program

SEPTEMBER

"I think it's like the looming fiscal crisis. They're still in denial about the population problem."

—**Marissa Camacho-Reyes**, president of the Philippine Center for Population and Development

"Madame chair, I would like to protest the very dictatorial tendency which perhaps is caused by the lack of lucid interval at the moment."

—Sen. **Richard Gordon**, to Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago, chair of the energy committee, when she ignored his question during the hearing on new power rate hikes

"We would like to create an environment where if you speak Filipino in English Zones, you will not get an answer."

—Pamantasan ng Lunsod ng Maynila president **Benjamin Tayabas** on its new policy that required its 10,000 students to speak English in English-designated areas at certain hours

"If anything is taxable, sure, tax the church. What do you think of the church, greedy?"

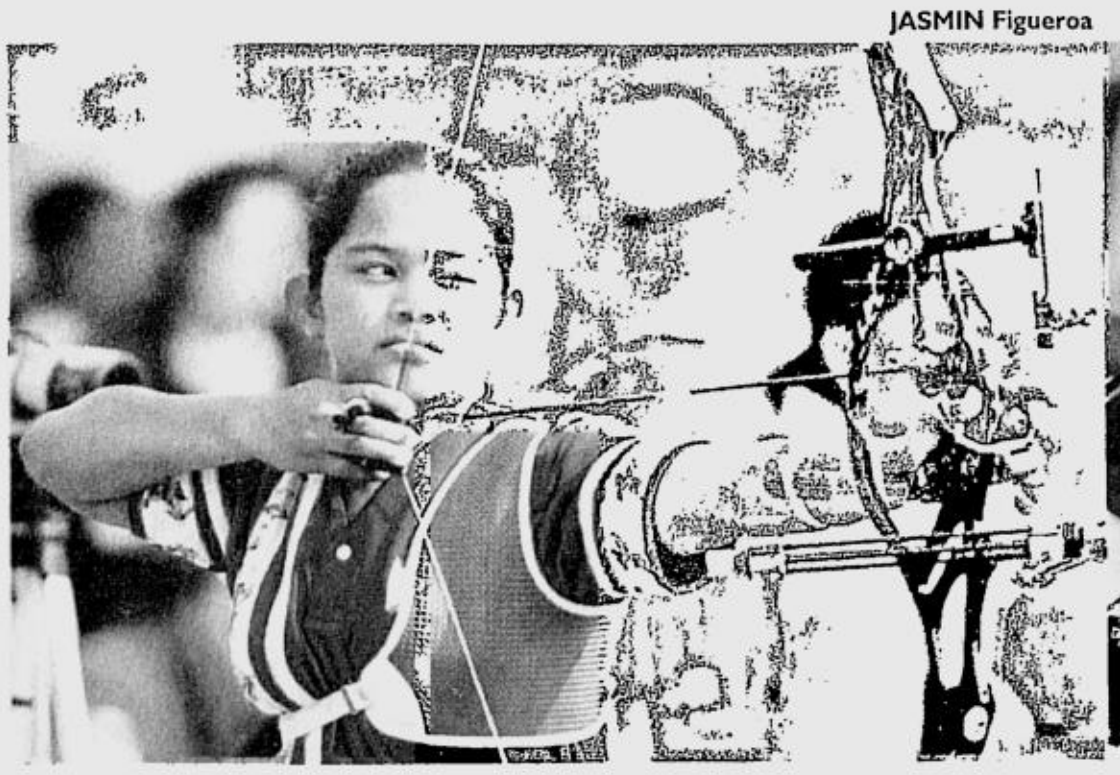
—Manila Archbishop **Rosales** on the proposed tax on churches and religious groups, to raise government revenue. Rosales countered that the government should give part of its tax collection to the church for development projects

"Right now at least I have a chance to identify them. I need to put something in the coffin."

—**Albert Kundukhov**, who lost his mother, wife and daughter in the bloody end to the three-day school siege in Beslan, Russia. At least 300 children and adults died when Russian soldiers stormed the building held by Chenchen militants

To page 7

JASMIN Figueroa



KEANNA Reeves

JAMBY Madrigal

SUSAN Roces

JOSE de Venecia

Quotes ...from page 6

"Impose taxes on second or third mansions, condominium units, golf course shares, yachts, private planes and helicopters and other displays of extravagance."

—Former Economic Planning Sec. **Cielito Habito**, challenging GMA to tax the luxuries of rich families

"Don't ask, *baka maiyak kayo.*"

—National Treasurer **Mina Figueroa**, revealing that she resigned because she wanted higher pay and not because of the government's fiscal problem

"So please, let's all watch our country being showcased on international TV. I hope it will bring increased tourist interest in the Philppines."

—Energy Sec. **Vince Perez**, announcing that Malacañang officiails will take a break from the financial crisis to watch "The Amazing Race" episode shot in Metro Manila and Palawan

"Like the proverbial thief in the night, he attacked when nobody was looking."

—**Supreme Court** decision disbarring former Danding Cojuangco legal counsel Leo Palma for "gross immoral conduct and violating his oath as a lawyer." Palma had secretly married his client's daughter, then 22, in Hong Kong without her parents' knowledge while he was still married to another woman with whom he has three children

"*Susmariosep! Wala na bang makuhang iba?*"

—Former President **Joseph Estrada** on GMA's appointment of ex-Sen. Ramon Revilla as head of the scandal-prone Public Estates Authority (PEA), the government's reclamation body

"I was a music teacher. I was choir director of El Shaddai. I believe I'm qualified otherwise the President would not have appointed me."

—El Shaddai spokesperson **Melquiades Robles**, defending his appointment as administrator of the Light Rail Transit Authority

"This brother and sister act made GSIS their private enclave."

—Rep. **Rolex Suplico**, disclosing how GSIS President and General Manager Winston Garcia and his sister and assistant, Carolyn Garcia-Empemano, incurred P5.25 million in unliquidated cash advances in 10 months alone in 2001

"This we did in our honest though naïve desire for change."

—Part of the apology statement that the **leaders of the failed Oakwood mutiny** read to GMA. The President accepted the apology but said that court martial proceedings against the six Magdalo leaders would still be pursued

"Any real church... will back up what I'm doing because I'm trying to save lives."

—Thai Sen. **Mechai Viravaidya**, also known as "the Condom King," urging Filipinos to use condoms despite the contrary stand of the conservative Catholic Church

"Instead of submitting peacefully, he opted to fight to resist arrest."

—Communist spokesperson **Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal**, on the assassination of breakaway leftist rebel Arturo Tabara who, police said, was shot by his former comrades

"We also go after Christians, Indians, Chinese."

— **Edu Manzano** on accusations that the OMB was only targeting Muslim traders in its campaign against pirated discs

OCTOBER

"We must defeat them on the battlefield. They are just fooling the government with the negotiation."

—Brig. Gen. **Victor Corpus** on his former comrades in the New People's Army, on the occasion of his retirement from active duty with the AFP

"If the government doesn't even know the already well-known big-time (*jueteng*) operators in Luzon, what does it know?"

—Archbishop **Oscar Cruz**, chair of the National Crusade Against Jueteng, daring the government to name names

"If I never had cancer, I wouldn't have found this much love for others, or received just as much love from them."

—**Rio Diaz-Cojuangco**, before she succumbed to cancer this year

"To be Echo's girlfriend means it's okay for everyone to kick your ass, even though they know you don't have any fault... I was hiding, lying and denying, and I hate lying. I would feel dirty after lying."

—**Cindy Kurleto**, revealing in an interview that she and boyfriend Jericho Rosales were forced to hide their relationship by ABS-CBN Talent Management to protect Rosales's soap opera love team with Kristine Hermosa

"For a long time, I was afraid of people. When somebody rang the doorbell at home, I would get scared and hide inside the cabinets."

—"Starstruck" survivor **Jennylyn Mercado**, on being abused by her stepfather when she was three years old

"I was afraid before that Hacienda Luisita would become another Mendiola Massacre. My worst fears have come true."

—Anakpawis representative **Rafael Mariano** after several striking workers at Hacienda Luisita were killed by police and military during a violent dispersal

"People file lawsuits for cutting down mango trees and killing dogs. How much more should we be indignant at the killing of our own people?"

—**Fr. Ramon Capuno**, parish priest of Our Lady of Lourdes parish in Hacienda Luisita, on the death of striking workers

"There is nothing to be ashamed of. Go to our provinces and the people themselves will say that it is a good thing."

—Davao del Sur Congressman **Douglas Cagas**, defending the restoration of the "pork barrel" for members of Congress

"Every day has been a roller coaster ride. This has been the best Christmas ever."

—**Grace Nayan**, on hearing of brother Angelito Nayan's release by a Taliban splinter group after being held hostage in Afghanistan, along with two other United Nations co-workers, for more than three weeks

"I'm the new Imelda Marcos."

—Hollywood actress **Catherine Zeta-Jones**, admitting that she seeks therapy in shopping for shoes, and once more confirming Imelda's global iconic status

NOVEMBER

"What's the best business school in the country? The PMA, because it produces millionaires."

—**Text joke** circulated during the Congressional hearings on corruption charges against Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia

"Not even a bicycle will be spared."

—**A sheriff**, enforcing the Sandiganbayan's seizure order on Maj. Gen. Garcia's assets

"Why did they have to take it out on my son? I would like an answer to this question. If not I will filibuster on this bill and it will never pass for the six years I am in this Senate."

—Sen. **Defensor-Santiago** at the Senate deliberations on the new charter of the University of the Philippines, blaming officials of the university for her son's suicide last year

"I'm blessed that I'm a Poe. It helps being his son but I'm really just a normal person."

—**Ron Allan "Ronian" Poe**, son of action king Fernando Poe Jr. by actress Ana Marin

"Explain to us this poverty."

—Sen. **Ping Lacson**, lauding Air Force Col. Andres Largo and Army Col. Eduardo Gonzaga for declaring a net worth of only P150,000 and P125,986, respectively during the confirmation of their promotion

"We have determined that the story is not true. Our heart goes out to a child like Faye whose mother is in deep emotional problems."

—The **Bread of Life Ministry**, after member Cathy San Juan apparently fabricated a story about her daughter Fay Nicole winning a nonexistent science and technology contest in Brisbane, Australia

DECEMBER

"Would the chairman accept my amendment in the event that I prove, through Pythagorean theorem, that this is a point at which the consumer will not buy cigarettes?... I went through tedious computations to show why we have reached certain elasticities. I did this to prove a point, that there is an econometric model and that there is an empirical data and process."

—Senator **Jamby Madrigal** during Senate hearings on the computation of "sin" taxes on tobacco and other products

"Given the data and the regression analysis, what is the slope coefficient that was found?"

— Sen. **Mar Roxas**, responding to Senator Madrigal during the same Senate hearing

"People don't want to watch your coverage because you capitalize on personal hurt."

—actress **Susan Roces**, widow of FPJ to ABS-CBN's Karen Davila, charging the network with being biased against FPJ in its coverage of the presidential election

"My daughter brought us so much happiness and so much joy. For us, she is really irreplaceable. Next to my wife, she is the light of my life."

—Speaker **Jose de Venecia**, mourning the death of his youngest daughter KC in a fire that razed his house

"*Gandang lalake talaga. Hanggang ngayon, nababakla pa rin ako sa iyo.* (You're such a handsome man. Until now, you make me turn gay)"

—Comedy King **Dolphy**, addressing FPJ while speaking at the necrological service for the late action king

Pinoy Nga

By Jess Abrera

Maligayang Pasko

Love Notes

By Joe D' Mango

Just Friendship, Not Love

I got so blind that I believed Ryan's show of caring and love was meant for someone more than a friend

Dear Joe,

I'm Francine, a college student, and an avid fan of Love Notes *on TV and the radio.*

It's been two years now since I met Ryan. He joined our school organization and we became casual acquaintances. But late last year, we got a chance to become closer. We would talk about anything under the sun, including love. He would always tell our friends that I'm one of the few people who really knew him. He made me feel very special, visiting me at home and texting me often. He would always tell me to take care of myself.

It wasn't long, Joe, before I realized that I was falling for Ryan. I used to deny this feeling to myself but I was just so overwhelmed that there was someone who shows concern for a simple girl like me. But I'm afraid that I'll be rejected again. My recent heartache was over Gerard, who fell out of love for me and courted my best friend, Marianne. I got terribly hurt. And Ryan helped me stand again and made me realize that there's life after pain.

But history repeated itself. I got so blind that I believed Ryan's show of caring and love was meant for someone more than a friend. I had to tell myself to stop dreaming and wake up in the real world. I did when he told me that he was in love with our friend Nicole and he was ready to take the risk of courting her. I was hurt again and cried every night and even in school.

I started to avoid Ryan but he called me up one day and asked what my problem was. He asked if I fell for him and I answered yes. He told me that nothing will change, he'll still be the same Ryan I knew.

Joe, I can't accept the fact that Ryan and Nicole are in love with each other now. I want to be happy for them but I can't. I wanted to convince myself that this was all God's plan. God has His own reason for making things happen. I'm trying to move on because I have never seen Ryan as happy as he is now. But every time I see them together, the pain comes rushing back. I don't know what I'll do. I don't want to lose our friendship. I love Ryan but he doesn't love me. Please help me, Joe.

Francine

Dear Francine,

It has always been said that sometimes the only person who can make us happy is the same person who makes us cry. But most of the time, we don't find this happiness because the person who made us cry doesn't love us at all. We all know that love has a way of painting the world around us with beautiful colors. It can make us see something that is not real, something that is not there at all. A person in love would often give more meaning to the actions of another person which he or she interprets as some form of caring or even a gesture of love.

But the thing is, when we are blindly in love, we really don't see the world around us as it is. We see it differently. Some people even build their own world of make-believe where they can live happily ever after. But the only "after" there can be is disillusionment.

I know it's hard to see the difference between love and friendship when it's love that we want so much. You have given a different meaning to Ryan' s friendship and then you found out that is was simply friendship. Yet you are still holding on to that notion of love. Francine, I know it is one of the most difficult things to do but sometimes the only way to prove our love for a person is to simply give him the freedom to choose who he wants to love, even if it may not be us. Let us always remember that the greatest challenge in this life is how to love unselfishly and make other people happy even if it means giving up our own happiness.

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Blues in the Night	Quincy Jones	bluesndnight
Caravan	Arthur Lyman	caravan
Cha Cha Cha	Jimmy Luxury	chachacha
Claire De Lune	The Philadelphia Orchestra	clairedelune
Dream Dream Dream	Percy Faith and His Orchestra	dreamdream
Gritty Shaker	David Holmes	grittyshaker
L' Appuntamento	Gianni Ferrio	appuntamento
Moon River	Liberace	moonriver
Spirit in the Sky	Norman Greenbaum	spiritndsky
Take My Breath Away	Berlin	breathaway
Theme from a Summer Place	Percy Faith and His Orchestra	themesummer

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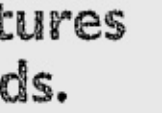

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